# The Fantail Pigeon: How to Breed, Manage, and Exhibit

Charles Arthur House

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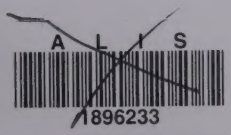

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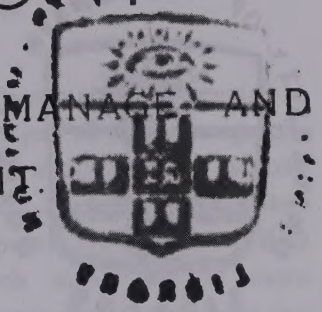
# THE FANTAIL PIGEON.

## HOW TO BREED, MANAGE, AND EXHIBIT.



BY

C. A. HOUSE.

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# PREFACE.

It is just twenty years since I became first interested in the lovely Pigeon which is the subject of this monograph. Often, during that period, have I wondered why no one has ever ventured to bring out such a work. The Fantail is, certainly, one of the most popular varieties, as well as one of the most beautiful, which makes it the more surprising that none of its adherents have ever given the Fancy the benefit of their experience in its breeding and management.

At the request of several prominent breeders of the variety, I have undertaken the task, and my views as herein set forth are the results of my own practical experience, and will, I trust, be kindly received by all who, like myself, are anxious for the Fantail to make progress in public estimation.

The work of writing this monograph has, indeed, been a labour of love, and I trust its perusal may give much pleasure to every Fantail devotee into whose hands it may fall.

C. A. HOUSE.

*Idle, Bradford,*
*October, 1900.*

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## CHAPTER I.

### Introduction.

IF we are to believe all that has been written in the ancient Pigeon books of the world, the Fantail has been one of the most admired members of the columbarian race from time immemorial. I doubt not the truth of the ancient writers for one moment. Pigeon breeders of olden times bred their birds for the love they had towards one of the most beautiful portions of God's creation, and not for filthy lucre's sake. Such being the case, one can readily understand that the gentle, graceful creature known as the Fantail would be a prime favourite. To-day, in this nineteenth century race for gold, the Fantail, perhaps, is not thought so much of, and may not be styled amongst the most popular breeds of the day. Often have I said to a show secretary or committeeman, "Why don't you give a class for Fantails," and just as often the answer has come back, "They don't pay." There is, no doubt, a lot of truth in the reply. The Fantail is not everybody's bird. A loft in which the bold, vigorous bird known as the Show Homer, or the strong, massive Antwerp would thrive and do well, would be quite unsuited for the delicate proportions of the Fantail. This, coupled with the large amount of space Fantails require in a loft, and also in the

matter of exhibition hampers, militates in a great measure againt their popularity with those exhibitors who need to make both ends meet, and a bit beyond.

I hope fanciers of the other so-called popular varieties of Pigeons will not consider me egotistical if I venture to institute a comparison between the Belgian Canary and the Fantail Pigeon. The late W. A. Blakston, whose writings have, in days gone by, so often charmed the readers of "The Fanciers' Gazette," used to say that fanciers of the Belgian Canary were a superior order of beings to the ordinary run of Canary breeders, and lived in an atmosphere of a more intellectual character, and one not so sordid as the general body of fanciers. If this is true of the lover of the Belgian Canary, I think it is quite as true of the Fantail Pigeon devotees.

Anyone taking up Fantails with a desire to make a lot of money out of their hobby would soon find they had made a mistake, and would quickly throw their Fans. over in despair and disgust. I don't for one moment mean to say that money is not to be made out of Fantails, because it is. Several fanciers whom I could name add not a little to their income year by year by the profit accruing from their Fans. Still, their returns could not possibly be compared with those of the leading lights in Homers, Antwerps, Owls, Turbits, or Dragons. This, no doubt, tends to keep the ranks of Fantail breeders very select, and the majority are men who care far more

for their birds than they do for the £ s. d. they bring in. Indeed, quite recently, one of our leading fanciers whose name has been well-known for the best part of two decades, said to me: "If any one takes up Fans with the idea of making them pay he will be much disappointed"; whilst our worthy secretary, Mr. Fuller-Russell, declares that the Fantail Club is the most select of any club which watches over the columbarian race. If this is true, then all must agree that bird and club are well mated, inasmuch as both hold a unique position in the Fancy.

It seems strange that although amongst the Fancy proper there should be so few steadfast adherents to the Fantail, yet amongst those who keep Pigeons merely as a hobby, it is one of the most popular and largely kept varieties. Again, many fanciers of other varieties keep an odd pair or two of Fans "just for the love of the thing," as they say, and because they like to see them about. Its graceful carriage and peculiar motion make the Fantail a very interesting bird to anyone; in fact, at a show, no class attracts so much attention from visitors as does that set apart for the jaunty little Fan.

To get back to the ancient authorities—it is strange how we all like to be able to spread the halo of antiquity over our hobbies—they all agree in declaring India to be the birthplace and home of the Fantail. One thing is certain, and that is the Fantail to-day is very common

indeed in India. I have been told by friends who have visited India that Fantails are always on sale in the bazaars in Calcutta, and in greater variety than they are in England, that is so far as colour is concerned. In tail, the birds of India's coral strand are much inferior to our English birds. Some eight or nine years ago I was fortunate enough to get a few Fans from Calcutta, birds of most exquisite shape, style, and action. One of them was a beautifully broken almond saddle. These birds arrived here during the very severe early days of 1891, and were not strong enough to withstand the inclement weather, so "shuffled off this mortal coil," and with them went my hopes of producing something unique.

How the Fantail was first produced, and what crosses run in its veins is mere matter of conjecture, and with it I have not to deal. So far as I know, the Fantail may have been known long before the all conquering Romans came to this "right little, tight little island" of ours. I am willing to take it like we take many other things—not on toast, but on trust. In addition to all the properties I see to love and admire in the Fantail, I also respect it owing to the sanctity of antiquity which hangs about it. Most Fantail breeders will have read the very interesting account given by Mr. George Ure, of Dundee, on the introduction of the small, nervous, little birds, therefore I need not go over ground which has been trodden over and over again. I prefer to take the bird as we find it to-day, and ignore all idea of there being two distinct types, an error, for it is an

error, which appeared in a book on Pigeons published so recently as the end of 1894.

At the time when Mr. Ure introduced the nervous, tremulous, dancing birds to the Fancy, there certainly was another kind of Fantail, and one in which great stress was laid upon the Fan. Those days are past and gone, never to return. It is a recognised fact tuat the typical show Fantail of to-day is neither English nor Scottish, but a happy combination of both, and a vast improvement upon the originals. I have no wish to go back to either the large, loose feathered, coarse, English type, or the nervous, dancing, tailless, Scottish Shaker. There was neither beauty in the one, nor grace in the other. The Fantail of to-day, with its small, round body, well spread tail, with just sufficient nervous properties to show off to advantage the beautiful curves and general outlines of the whole, has been attained through many years of scientific matings of birds vastly different in formation and general characteristics. I say let us forget all about the Fantails of the past. Appreciate the labour and perseverance of fanciers who have given us such a model and produced so many birds approaching it.

To-day, our bird is a combination of all the grand points of the active, continuous-motioned birds, and the big, flat-tailed ones. As England and Scotland are merged into one happy and profitable union, so have the English and Scottish types of Fantails been merged into

one harmonious whole, and to-day English birds can win in Scotland under Scottish judges, whilst the Scots return the compliment by winning on English soil, under English adjudicators. I cannot close this chapter more fittingly than by quoting the words of America's great Fantail breeder, Mr. Jesse M. Rutter, who, in a recent article in the American "Pigeon News," says :—

"A small Shaker, with the largest circular tail possible to breed, about sums up the modern type that our best fanciers try to produce. All writers of the past apparently agree that a good Fantail should be small, and to-day, especially in England, judges are awarding honours to trim little birds, excelling in all-round excellence. At the Dairy Show, last October, Mr. William Stevenson, a life-long fancier, went in strongly for shape of body, fineness of head and neck, and correctness of carriage. Big, heavy-headed birds, with plenty of tail to help them through, were not recognised, and the uniformity of the awards gave great satisfaction. This plainly points out the present drift of the Fantail Fancy towards elegant symmetry. The era of one-point judging is certainly passing away. Neither wonderful style nor an enormous tail is now, singly, sufficient to put any Fantail at the head of its class. The present winner must be well balanced and truly 'a thing of beauty' to get full approval from critical breeders. While this 'all-round' standard holds sway the peerless beauty breed will steadily grow popular. Many fancy varieties require a specially

educated taste to fully estimate the excellence of superior specimens, but the truly high-bred Fantail struts on dainty tip-toe, and at first causes the non-fancier to cry out, 'What a pretty Pigeon!' Any one-man standard, or temporary fad-favouring excess in certain points, is sure to hold back the breed. Let all-round symmetry be upheld by every admirer of the most graceful Pigeon yet cultivated by man. Grace is defined as 'perfection of form and easy elegance of manner.' What fitting words to use in describing a typical, broad-tailed Shaker, matchless in outline, and alive with easy action."

## CHAPTER II.

### The Ideal Fantail.

BEFORE proceeding to say anything about the breeding of the Fantail, I consider it judicious to give a description of my ideal bird. My reason for so doing is that if my readers have my ideal before them, they will be the better able to understand what I mean when referring to the various points of merit and demerit. Some writers upon this charming variety in describing it have simply taken three points, and not troubled about anything else. I will not attempt to deny that these three points—shape, carriage, and tail—are the three great essentials of the breed, but they want to be brought down finer, and worked out point by point in the order of relative merit. Further, there are other points which can hardly be included under either of the three heads mentioned, yet which have a great deal to do in the building up of the ideal Fantail.

To begin at the beginning, I will take the beak first. This must be very thin and fine, of medium length, with the upper mandible slightly curved. I have seen birds with short, stumpy sort of beaks; such birds have usually another great fault, and that is a broad, bumpy skull. I have also seen birds with extremely long beaks. These

**Mr. G. E. Gray's White Hen, "Queen of Trumps."**

1st Dairy, 1st Aquarium, 1st and 4 Spls., one for Best Pigeon in the Show, Ayr, &c.

are generally very thin and weak, so weak that the birds have scarcely strength to pick up their food without the beak twisting. As to the colour of the beak, I will speak of this in dealing with the different varieties or colours.

The head should be very fine and snakey, and free from peak or shell. No one can deny that the Fantail looks much more aristocratic without a crest than it does with one, yet, strange to say, there is a large amount of crest blood running in our Fantails to-day. I usually get two or three in the course of a season amongst my whites, and three years ago bred two blacks with most beautiful peaks. Never have I seen a peaked blue; whites, blacks, and saddles often throw them, and it seems strange the blues should not. The head should be fine and nicely modelled, no lumps, or angularities, but a nice graceful, yet infinitesimal, rise from the beak to the crown, and then falling away again to the back of the skull. Some birds have Homer shaped heads; these birds, as a rule, have short, thick necks, and, generally speaking, have a low bred look about them. Glove-like is a good term to express what the beak wattle should be like. It should be very fine in texture, and fit very closely. The eye cere varies in colour in the different varieties, but in all it should be very fine and close fitting.

A great deal of attention should be paid to the neck. Many an otherwise good bird is spoilt by a thick, coarse, neck. Quite recently I killed one of the most

lovely coloured blues ever seen, owing to its being short and thick in neck. It had a grand tail, and a nice, shapely body, but its neck was not in keeping with the rest of its good properties. It was continually offending my eye, so I wrung its offending member, and that charming coloured blue graced the inside of a pie dish. A fine neck is the finishing touch to a really tip-top Fantail. I care not how good a bird may be in all other points, it must have a graceful, finely built neck ere it can captivate the eye of the learned connoisseur in Fantail matters. Not only must the neck be thin, and gradually taper from its junction with the thorax to its meeting with the head, but it must also be in correct proportion to the length of the bird's back. If it is too long, it will not be able to rest upon the cushion, but will hang over on one side; if too short it will not reach the cushion, and if the bird is very stylish, it will have what is known as top action, the result of which will be that the centre of its tail will generally be broken by the bird continually playing upon it instead of on the cushion.

We now come to that all-important factor, shape, but shape must not be confounded with size. A bird may be of good shape, yet too large for exhibition. These birds invariably make the best stock birds. On the other hand, a bird may be most delicately small, and yet not of the correct shape; such birds are of no value for stock purposes, their bodies are generally of a wedge or cocoa-nut shape, and are useless both from an exhibition and breeding

standpoint. The ideal Fantail must be small, but it must also be round in body. When the bird is in position its chest should resemble a ball as much as anything, and, viewed either from the back, front, or side, it should present one general uniformity of curve. It should be as broad as long, and as deep as wide, with no angular or pointed extremities. The back should be slightly hollow, so that the neck may be held gracefully when thrown back, for the head to rest upon the cushion. In length it must be short, but not out of proportion with the rest of the body. There are three things which generally go together in a Fantail—back, legs, and flights—extremes in any of these points are usually found in birds which are wrong in two out of the three, if not all three. Thus a bird extra long in flights will be found too long in back or neck. On the other hand, a bird extremely short in flights will be found too short in neck. The happy medium is what is required.

A well-balanced tail is a great feature in a Show Fantail, but it cannot be obtained unless the rump is of sufficient size and strength to hold the tail in position. Here again is seen the natural affinity one fault or virtue has for another. A wedge-shaped body is usually accompanied by a narrow rump, which, if it has grown a good tail, cannot by any possibility carry it, but allows it to fall on one side, over the bird's back, or draggle on the ground; in fact, any way and every way except as it ought to be. In a well-modelled, nicely-rounded body the rump is usually

stout enough, not only to grow a good tail, but to hold it in position as well.

Well-finished, would be a fitting appellation to give to the correct and much sought after cushion. This cushion, which is full and massive, with the feathers closely overlapping each other, both before and behind the tail, is usually found upon the broad rumped birds. In these, the cushion runs away from the body up the tail, in what seems to be one solid compact mass, so close and even are the feathers constituting it. A broken or uneven cushion is looked upon with disfavour, and rightly so. It does not possess the beautiful appearance of the solid cushion, and it further raises suspicion in the minds of beholders that it has been tampered with. Here I would sound a warning note to those who seem to be ever ready to think evil of a brother fancier. Don't imagine that because a bird seems to be thin and broken in the feathering of its cushion it has been tampered with. If you allow your suspicions to be raised every time you see a slack cushion, you will often wrong many an honest and upright exhibitor. My grand old Black hen, Champion Lulu, now the property of Mrs. Sawtell, always had a peculiar appearance on the cushion when in my possession, and I notice she still retains it, although it is now more than two years since she left my loft. I mention this here, because upon one occasion, at the Dairy Show, one of our oldest breeders accused me of faking her cushion, and one of the Fancy journals in its

report of the Palace once said she had a "suspicous looking cushion." Her cushion, however, has always been as nature made it.

There is a great difference in the feathering of birds; some are very hard and solid in feather, others are soft and cottony in their feathering; there is neither strength nor tenacity in the fibre of their feather, and they quickly become ragged and rough looking. A strong robust bird of the old cart-wheel kind—as my friend Loversidge would style it—is never ragged in cushion, its feather is very strong in the fibre, and broad in the web. If I noticed any raggedness of the cushion in such a bird, my suspicions would doubtless be aroused, because I should know it was not natural, but did the same thing appear in a small, highly sensitive, extremely stylish, and delicately modelled bird, I should have to satisfy myself by very careful and detailed scrutiny before I should be convinced that it was not natural. In these birds, the fibre of the feather is not, as a rule, over strong, and the continuous action of the bird upon the cushion causes it to break and split, and sometimes the feathers break off very low down. There is one point to be mentioned here, and that is the natural curve of the long cushion feathers, both in front and at the back of the tail. During the past year or two several birds have won in good company, without this natural curve. I unhesitatingly say such birds are faked, and ought not to be allowed to deprive better birds of their

just positions. Flat cushion feathers are not natural, they are the result of heat and pressure.

We now come to what, in some men's mind, is yet the cardinal feature of the bird—the tail. Only a short time back, I remarked to a certain popular judge, who is also a well-known writer upon columbarian matters, that I thought he should have put a certain bird "a little higher up in the prize list." He replied, "Well, you know I always say that a Pouter is not a Pouter, unless it can blow a good crop; neither is a Fantail a Fantail, unless it carries a good tail. Its name denotes what the bird should be." Very pretty reasoning certainly, and it sounds mighty convincing, and full of sound argument. But is it? I say, No; with a big N. too. Arguing on the same hypothesis, our judges should never award a prize to a Homer, unless it could "home." But how many of the present day Show Homers could find their loft if liberated a quarter of a mile away. What becomes of that extremely logical, and most convincing argument of the Pouter and the Fantail in such a case as this? "A rose, by any other name, would smell as sweet," and a variety should not be judged by its name, but by the properties which the standards, drawn up by its enthusiastic followers, say it should possess.

It is not necessary for a tail to be a big tail to be a good one. Beauty of symmetrical proportion, and uniformity of arrangement have far more to do with a

good tail than mere length and width of feather. We all like to get the latter when we can, but the former are, in my opinion, of far greater importance. Again, the tail should be in proportion to the size of the body. It is useless expecting a neat, trim little bird to carry the tail suitable for a big coarse stock bird. In shape, the tail should be slightly concave, not flat, as some people insist. This craving for flat tails on the part of some judges has been, no doubt, the faker's opportunity, and the smoothing iron has been brought into requisition to supply what nature failed to do. Almost circular in form is what is desired in a good tail, the opening at the bottom only being just large enough to admit of the flights going nicely through. The feathers should be long and broad, and overlap each other, so as to present one solid continuous appearance to the eye of the beholder.

People who do not thoroughly understand the variety, think a great deal of the number of feathers the tail contains. This never troubles the experienced and successful breeder. He wants quality, shape, and symmetrical arrangement of tail, not mere numbers. In my opinion, it is possible to have too many feathers in the tail, that is, more than the cushion can properly carry, or display. I have seen as many as forty-two feathers in a tail. This was on a bird owned by my friend, George Brown, of Chesterfield, but the arrangement was not over good. From twenty-eight to thirty-six is the general run; in fact, I might almost say that eight out of every ten well

bred Fantails hatched have thirty-two feathers, so often is that number found in a tail, and it is a number which is, generally, nicely displayed. The stem or standard of the feathers should be strong and hard, and the fibre close and tenacious, except just at the edges, where I like to see it frayed for about half-an-inch ; it makes the tail look more artistic, and saves it from a made-to-order appearance. Anything that is stiff looking seems out of place on the Fantail. It wants to be smart and springy looking all over, and a very hard solid tail looks almost as bad, if not quite, as one that is too thin.

Now come the understandings—the props of the whole structure. Essential as are all the foregoing body points they are of no avail unless carried by the correct shaped legs and feet. There are two things in this world which need good feet to show them off, and whenever I am judging either of them, neat feet tell largely. In weighing up a smart looking girl, I look at her head, and then at her feet. If she is neat and stylish there, it's all right, but I don't like slovenly feet, and no matter how handsome her face, I think little of her if she is untidy below. The same with a Fan. A good top is all right, but I do like to see neat, clean, trim looking legs and feet. A stout heavy leg and foot is in keeping with the coarse boned Antwerp, but it is quite out of place on the jaunty, nervous little Fantail. In colour, the legs and feet should be a rich bright coral red. They should be very fine in structure, and as straight and clean as those of a Derby winner, or a

challenge cup fox terrier. The legs should be of moderate length, not too short, as very short legs prevent the bird from showing its body qualities, and give it a cloddy, heavy appearance. On the other hand, if the legs are long and stilty, the bird will show too much daylight underneath its body, and its tail will also be carried too high. It will thus be seen that a moderate length of leg is what is required.

Next comes that all important feature of the modern Fantail—carriage. No matter how good a Fan may be in structural properties, if it has not carriage it is a waster. A monumental, statuesque creature is not required, but one full of life, vivacity, and movement. As a prominent member of the club said to me only a short time ago: "What is a Fan without carriage?" Ere I could reply, he answered the question with "Why nothing!" I could but agree with him, for what availeth the beautifully moulded body, the graceful outlines of the neck, and the solidity of tail, if carriage is not there to show them off? In dealing with carriage, I take the bottom first, and start with the feet, upon which the bird must walk in a tip-toeing jaunty fashion, with a light springing motion. A duck footed Fantail is no good at all. When it is showing itself it ought almost to look as though it wished to walk in the air. It is impossible to convey this peculiar tip-toe tread-on-the-wind style of thing either by a word picture, by an artist's sketch, or by a photograph, neither will show what is wanted. You can only see it in the living

specimen, and when you see it, it catches the eye at once, and you exclaim "That's it!" It is vanity itself personified, and the Peacock is not in it with a good Fantail. The head must be thrown well back in a graceful manner, and rest closely, yet easily, upon the cushion. The chest must be perfectly upright, so that a plumb-line could drop through the middle and down by the legs. The wings must be carried close up to the body, not allowed to hang down in a slovenly manner, nor to present a stiff, awkward appearance.

There is one noted bird going the rounds to-day, a white cock, which is quite stiff in one wing, yet withal, he has won many a 1st and special owing to his splendid carriage of body. I myself have given him a 3rd more than once, when judging, and in good competition that is as high as he should go, still he wins. I can only surmise that the stiff wing has not been noticed. The flights should be daintily carried, passed neatly through the opening at the bottom of the tail, just clearing the shoeing feathers, and meeting at the tips. Long flighted birds often fail here, as the extreme length of feather prevents them from holding the flights well up. A well carried tail adds greatly to the beauty of a bird. It should be almost upright, yet not quite. It should allow the head to move easily upon the cushion, yet not allow of any daylight being seen between the head and the tail. The tail should not be dropped, neither should it hang over the bird's back in pot lid fashion. Birds that are extra good

in action are inclined to drop their tails when excited, and often suffer under judges who are a bit impatient.

We now come to the feature which of all others, distinguishes the Fantail from every other member of the columbarian family—motion, or action. This can be of two kinds, good and bad. Men who do not understand the breed, often, when judging, give the preference to birds with what is known as "pump handle action." The head is continually going up and down like a pump handle when worked. This is not what is required. Yet it often carries 1st and special under good men. The late lamented P. H. Jones, one of the best all-round judges England ever produced, rather favoured this kind of action. We want a nice gentle upheaval of the chest, with convulsive jerking and twitching of the neck and body, the head the while playing gently upon the cushion. Personally, I think a great deal of body motion, and greatly admire a bird which quivers and shakes all over its body, instead of in its neck and chest only. This is difficult to get, but in the words of that noted old time fancier of Fans, Mr. John Waters, of Belfast, it is the correct action for a Fantail. Mr. Lyell also favours this style of bird. As to how this peculiarity of action has been obtained, little is known; some say in-breeding produced it by causing a disturbance of the nerve function, thus bringing about muscular contraction. Those who argue this, say the in-breeding which caused the action weakened the spinal cord, and according to the strength, or otherwise, of this important

nerve does a bird excel in action. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of this, and simply give it for what it is worth. Of one thing I am certain, and that is, too much action can be bred. Who is there with a high-class stud but what has bred birds totally unable to fulfill the ordinary generative functions of the race owing too excessive action. Such birds are unable to control the action of the nervous muscles at all; their heads hang and dance about in a most ridiculous manner, and the bird is quite unable to do as it wishes, even to the extent of not being able to pick up its food like its companions. These poor unfortunates are only able to rest when they get their tail backed up against the side of the loft. This is not what we want, but birds with nice, gentle, graceful action.

"Fine feathers make fine birds," and the ideal Fantail must be clothed in a suit of close fitting hard, sound feathers, full of quality and lustre, and not of a dull, hard, sapless character. This concludes my description of an ideal Fantail. I have gone fully into the different points so that no one may misunderstand me, yet to make every point perfectly clear, and to allow my readers to arrive at a correct estimate of the relative value of the different points, I shall give later on the Fantail Club's standard for each of the different varieties of the breed.

## CHAPTER III.

### Establishing a Strain.

TO the true fancier, the breeding season is the most enjoyable and interesting portion of the year. The thoughtful breeder will spend months and months working out in his mind the different matings in his loft. He pairs his birds as experience and knowledge prompts him. Sometimes the results are what he expects, at others, all his carefully worked-out schemes and problems, as Burns would say, "aft gang agley," and he finds that his last state is verily worse than the first. The latter, fortunately, does not often occur, but when it does it only goes to prove how hard a battle we have to fight with the natural laws of reversion in the animal world.

In starting a loft of Fantails, the would-be winner of one of the Fantail Club's challenge cups must first of all lay himself out to provide a good roomy, well ventilated and perfectly water-tight dwelling. Homers, Dragons, and other hard feathered breeds will live and do well in a loft that would quickly ruin a Fantail. The Fantail must be protected from the weather. If allowed to expose itself to all the winds and rains of heaven, the finest Fantail in the kingdom would very quickly become a sick and sorry

looking creature. Not only must this variety have a warm and dry abode, but it must also be well provided for in the matter of floor area, as the tails take up a lot of room, and, in an overcrowded loft, are quickly damaged. A suitable loft having been erected, it should be fitted with nest boxes. For these, I know of nothing better than cube sugar boxes placed on the floor of the loft. I use nothing else myself, and find them to answer all my requirements most admirably. They are roomy, are easily cleansed, and are very portable. For nest pans, there are none better than Pratt's Acme, they beat all.

Having the loft ready, the next consideration is the Birds. How are they to be obtained? The safest, most reliable, and most satisfactory method of obtaining good stock is to go to some breeder who is known to possess a reliable breeding strain, and ask him to do his best for you. Tell him exactly what you want, how much current coin of the realm you have to spend, and leave the rest to his generosity and honour. Speaking from a long experience in the various branches of the Fancy, I can truthfully say you will have no cause to fear the result. In purchasing it is well to remember that the best are the cheapest. If you have £20 to invest put it into two pairs of birds, rather than into a large number. Young fanciers too often make this mistake of purchasing quantity in preference to quality. It is not necessary to purchase the very best birds of the day, in fact they could not be bought for the figure I have mentioned. I have myself

given £20 each for birds on several occasions, and once I went as high as £23 to secure a hen which I greatly coveted. This, I believe, is the highest figure ever paid by an English fancier of Fantails. It is reported that a gentleman on the Continent once gave an English exhibitor £25 for a noted white cock. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the amount, or the genuineness of the sale, but I do know that in a short time the famous white cock was back in the Englishman's loft. These, of course, were winning birds, and bought for what they could win in prizes quite as much as for what they could do in the breeding pen. Still, it is not absolutely necessary that the stock birds should be show birds. As a fact, most of our greatest winners are not bred from exhibition specimens, but from their close relatives, uncles, aunts, brothers, and sisters, of past cracks. From this it does not follow that tip-top birds are not good stock birds. The reason why exhibition specimens do not, as a rule, prove the best breeders is because the knocking and banging about which they get in connection with their show life takes a great deal away from the strength of their constitutions, and also enfeebles their nervous organisations. No such drawbacks affect their faulty brethren left at home to bloom unseen; these are storing up energy and strength, whilst their more highly favoured loft mates are expending it.

Having become the owner of some choice bred birds purchased in the manner indicated, the beginner is saved all the trouble and worry of having to select birds that will

be suitable to each other. For no matter how much care and thought he expends on the question, he can never be sure of getting birds, picked up in different lofts, to mate satisfactorily, whereas if they are selected from one loft, and mated by the seller, they are almost certain to hit and breed some decent youngsters the first season. The man who goes hither and thither purchasing his stock will never make a successful breeder, as every fresh cross he makes only knocks him back from, instead of helping him to reach, the goal of perfection. Some fanciers, I know, like to go their own way and select their own stock from the first. They cannot trust anyone else to do it. They are afraid of being victimized. They can, and will, take care of themselves. Strange as it may seem, these clever individuals are generally the ones who are "had." In such a case it is simply one man's wits against another's, and it's ten to one on the old hand. Apart from these clever folk, there are some who genuinely like to select their own birds from the pure love of the thing. To them a few words of advice may not be out of place.

There is a great deal in the judicious mating of a pair of Fantails, far more than meets the eye. In mating we want not only to pair two birds together, but they want to be so mated that the good and bad points of each will blend into one—if not perfect—almost perfect whole. It is not to be done with a rush. Mating Pigeons successfully is the outcome of long years of actual experience. Our most successful men mate their birds to produce results

which practice has told them they might expect. They breed for results and get them. They weigh up carefully all the little differences in shape, style, tail, &c., and then pair their birds so as to get as many good points, and as few bad ones as possible. Of course they do not always get what they want, owing, as before stated, to Nature putting a spoke in the wheel, and causing the birds to throw back to some ill-formed and quite forgotten ancestor. Although the power of reversion is so strong, it must not be forgotten that like produces like, especially when a certain line of breeding is followed year after year. Thus it is that the careful scientific breeder gets his satisfactory results.

It often happens that you will find most dissimilar birds matched together, producing almost ideal specimens. Why is this? Because the breeder has known what he was handling. Knowledge and experience taught him, and he used his wisdom well. The cock bird, generally speaking, will influence colour and feathering; while the hen will control constitution, size, and shape of body. These usual rules, however, are open to many exceptions due to special prepotency on the part of one of the pair, or when there is much inequality in their age. Some Fantails mark their young with personal features that seem fixed in the blood so strongly as to overcome all opposing forces. It will be remembered that some time ago, when writing in the "Fanciers' Gazette," I mentioned one particular strain of black Fantails that threw year by

year good specimens with a few white feathers on the rump, and no matter how these birds were mated the cocks always seemed able to produce some of those ticked rumps. Sometimes a bird will even breed properties that lie latent, and are not visible in the immediate parent. Properties which you have to go back three or four, and in some cases more, generations to find.

In mating it is not wise to put together two birds possessing the same faults. Of course, there are occasions when it is not needful to stick rigidly to this, but as a general principle it is a good one to work on. Thus, by way of example, two birds failing in tail should never be paired together, yet if they are both bred from heavy tailed birds, or from a heavy tailed strain, it will not matter.

. . If I was asked to pick out a typical stock pair from a loft of birds of which I had no previous knowledge, I should go on the following lines. First I should pick my hen, a young bird, of not more than three years of age, of grand shape, fine in head, and neck, round in body, short in leg, and with plenty of life and go about her. I should see that her chest was well up, her head well down, and her wings of nice length, and well tucked in. I should not trouble much about her tail, providing she had shape and carriage. Fineness of head and neck and shapely body invariably come from the hen, as does tail from the cock. For this reason I should want my cock bird first of all to

possess a sound, well-balanced tail, free from bunches or splits, and almost circular in shape; especially would the shoeing have to be good. This is a point upon which I lay great stress. No matter how good a tail may be otherwise, if it is not well shod it will not do for me. In addition to a good tail, he should be able to "double himself up," and show a bit of motion. It does not matter about his being a trifle coarse and big; the youngsters are likely to be all the stronger. My reason for selecting a cock with a good tail is because my experience teaches me that nine times out of ten the cock bird exercises the greater influence upon this handsome property.

Although I have here described a good pair of stock birds, I don't for one moment wish it to be understood that I decry breeding with exhibition stock. I do not, but, contrariwise, believe in breeding from the very best when and wherever possible, and in such cases, the nearer the birds come to my ideal pourtrayed previously, the better I am pleased. The description of the good stock pair is written solely for the benefit of the young, inexperienced, yet aspiring fancier, not blessed with a deep pocket.

Mr. O. E. Cresswell, who is a very old breeder of Fans, inclines to the idea that the hen influences tail more than the cock does, and although this does not agree with my own experience, it should be taken with great faith, as Mr. Cresswell's birds have always been noted for their

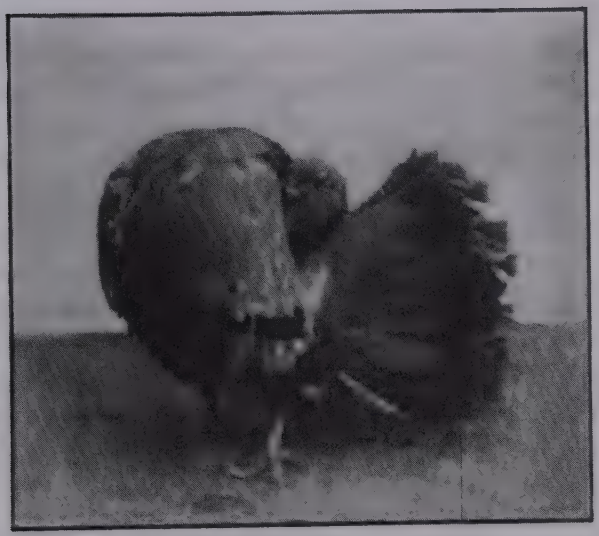
superb flat and well-shod tails. That astute breeder, Mr. W. Stevenson, also holds a similar opinion. On the other hand, Mr. John Waters, and my old friends, Messrs. Lee, Loversidge, and Miss Dickinson, all incline to my opinion —cocks for tail, hens for shape. There is another reason or two why I like to get my shape and carriage from the hen. A very nervous, high-actioned cock is practically useless for stock purposes. He gets so excited that it is absolutely impossible for him to perform the ordinary generative functions. Having played up to the hen, he will, just as she expresses her willingness to receive his advances, begin to go back and back, till he meets with some obstruction or other against which he can rest for a moment or two to recover his equilibrium. After a while he cools down, and the whole performance is gone through again and again, with just the same barren results. Again, a strong, lusty cock bird—and big-tailed birds usually are lusty—is more likely to produce strong, vigorous offspring than is a small, highly-strung, nervous little chap. I have known instances where cocks have been ten or twelve years old before they became steady enough to breed. I just mention this here so that the young hands may not discard a good bird because he does not fill. This peculiar failing on the part of extra good show cocks gives additional force to my argument that the biggest winners are bred from non-winners, especially so far as the cocks are concerned.

Although I have given a description of what I

consider an ideal pair of stock birds, such a pair as I should put together myself, it must not be forgotten that they may not hit. Various may be the reasons why they do not. One may be, as I have before pointed out, the prepotency of one or other of them, which may be unusually strong. If so, the mating possibly will not be a happy one. Then, again, the question of relative age is another factor that often puts to naught a carefully thought out mating. Given two Fantails of apparently equal strength and vigour, the youngest will usually have more than his or her half the say as to what properties will appear in the young. At times, the result seems simply ruled by the law of averages, and a vigorous yearling throws stock that show no points in common with a mate three or four times as old. Stranger still, some quite aged Fantails duplicate excellent qualities, even if paired to younger birds of less merit. Most successful matings consist in systematically setting weak points against strong ones, and trying to produce the best properties of the parents upon one or more of the progeny. After a year or two of breeding, a fancier who uses his brains will begin to understand his birds, and can then seek to build them up point by point, trying year by year to improve some particular property. To do this he mates two birds that are both superior in some special respect, body, for instance, with the idea of augmenting that special property. If two good bodied birds are mated together, it stands to reason they are far more likely to throw good bodied birds than if one of them is of bad shape. All-round excellence is what is

desired in the high-class exhibition Fantail. This can best be obtained by building up the fabric bit by bit, here a little and there a little. It is impossible to get all the properties at once, and he who expects to do so will meet with nothing but failure and disappointment. The expert scientific breeder seeks to improve his stock year by year in some particular point, and he goes on in this way each season until he at last possesses birds that can hold their own with the best of the Fancy. My experience is that you cannot reach a certain point as quickly if you attempt to do it all at once as you can if you make slow and sure progress by doing a bit at a time, and this, I know, is the experience of the best Fantail breeders in England and Scotland.

Once the birds are properly mated, there is little trouble after, excepting with the large proportion of clear eggs, due to the extra high quality cocks. There are no feeders wanted in the Fantail loft, these charming little members of the columbarian family making the very best of parents. They breed freely, and are very hardy. The last remark, however, needs qualifying so far as blacks are concerned. Although Fantails are seldom troubled with disease, it seems strange that when affected by it they, generally speaking, succumb to its effects. I do not propose here to go into all the elementary details of breeding, as what is applicable to most varieties is applicable to Fans. Further, the general management of Pigeons has been fully and specifically dealt with in Mr. Wood's



**Blue Cock, "Prince Charming."**

1st Crystal Palace, 1st and Spl. Fantail Club Show at Whitby, 1st and Spl. Gloucester, 1st Leeds, 1st Stafford, 1st Hednesford, 1st Northampton, 1st St. Ives, &c.

**Bred and Exhibited by Mr. C. A. House.**

admirable manual, "Pigeon Culture," which can be obtained post free from the "Fanciers' Gazette" office for 2/6.

I have spoken of the prevalence of clear eggs when endeavouring to breed Fantails. This may, in some measure, be avoided by cutting off six or seven feathers on each side of the tail. Some fanciers only cut the hens' tails, others cut both cocks and hens; the writer is numbered amongst the latter. To avoid putting too much strain on the birds, and making them lay profitless eggs over and over again, I give the barreners a pair of eggs from a fruitful source, a few days before being due to hatch. By this means the fruitful birds get a rest by sitting about a fortnight on the eggs, further, they are not exhausted by the cares of a family, and thus you get a second nest in a much shorter period than if you let them incubate and bring up their young in the ordinary way. Further, the pair that had clear eggs become steadier by having to perform a course of parental duties right through, and it often happens that this causes the second batch of eggs to be fruitful.

Many of our leading fanciers shut up their best birds in cages about three feet long and two feet deep as soon as they see them driving, and keep them shut up till the hen has laid. This is in order to avoid clear eggs, as the cocks are not apt to become so excited when shut up in this fashion, further, having an habitation entirely to them-

selves, they avoid interruptions from the cantankerous bosses of the loft, and thus the generative functions are more effectively performed.

If, in his first year, the young beginner has managed to breed a few nice youngsters, he should, if possible, ask the advice of some older fancier as to their mating for the second season. If this cannot be, and the original pair have been unrelated, he should breed some of the young back to their parents. This sib, or in-breeding, some people argue is unnatural. They say it weakens the constitutions, breeds disease, and is the forerunner of all ills. I don't believe it. One glass of whiskey toddy the last thing at night makes a man feel comfortable himself within, and at peace with all the world without; but a dozen glasses makes a beast of him, and renders him obnoxious to himself and all the world besides. So it is with in-breeding. Its use is quite correct and proper, but its abuse does mean ruination and destruction in every shape and form. It must not be carried too far, but carried out on careful, methodical lines; with patience and watchfulness, it is the veritable sesame to the treasure house of breeding winners of first and cup at the Palace. Some men are so constituted that they must carry everything to excess, the happy medium has no place in their thoughts or actions. In their hands I can easily believe that in-breeding would result in a diminution of standard properties, and that in a few years their birds would have a marked tendency to contract all sorts and manners of

diseases, and gradually decrease and dwindle away from sheer lack of stamina.

Guided by the description of my ideal, the young fancier should have little difficulty in mating up his birds the second year if he is unable to secure the assistance of some more experienced fancier. If the old hen is of the small and cobby kind, he should pair to her the one particular son most like his father, and the old cock should be mated to his daughter which is most like her mother. Such mating as this is simply rolling all the good points of your original stock up together. One of the most successful breeders I know swears by this kind of mating in the second year, whilst another of my friends, one of Yorkshire's most prominent and successful breeders of Antwerps, declares that all his best birds have been bred from brothers and sisters. I have frequently crossed both ways and have met with much success from each.

It sometimes happens that a fancier puts together two birds which excel in some particular property, yet not one of their progeny is above the standard of mediocrity, so far as that property is concerned. This often proves a stumbling-block to the novice, as he has imagined that two birds, extra good in some point, would throw veritable marvels in that respect. He finds it is not so, and in his disappointment discards both old and young birds, and starts afresh. Foolish fellow! He throws away birds of incalculable value. The old hand does not act thus. He

knows that the point sought for must be in the youngsters; although it has not come out at the first time of asking. His plan is directly opposite to that of the inexperienced new beginner. He pairs the sire to one of his daughters, the dam to one of her sons, the rest brother to sister, and the next season doubtless puts him a long way up the ladder he is climbing. This is one of the points where experience often keeps the fancier from making a false step. Of course, this close pairing of relations must not be followed, or disaster, swift and sure, will overtake the perpetrator. If the original stock have been purchased in the manner I recommended, they will be somewhat, although possibly distantly, related, and if the same system has been followed in mating all of them and their progeny in the second season, they will come in useful for crossing one with the other in the third season, by which time an astute and enthusiastic fancier will have learnt sufficient to guide him in his subsequent matings without the aid of friend or tutor, as no one should know the special idiosyncrasies in breeding any particular bird better than its owner.

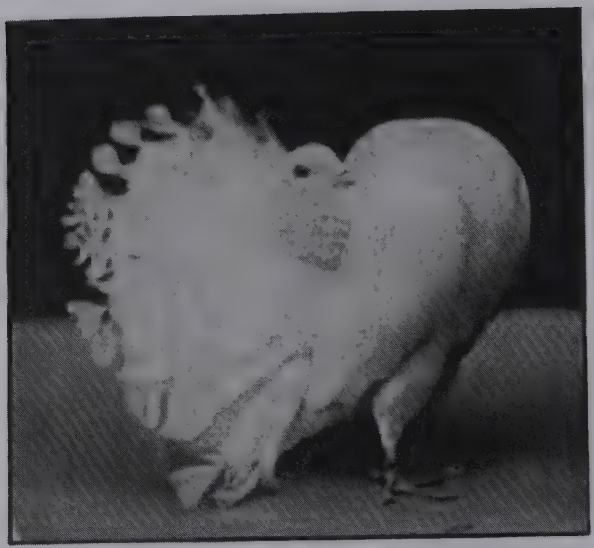
'Ere I leave this question of establishing a strain I must strongly urge upon my readers the necessity of keeping their best hens. Some breeders think more of their cocks than they do of the hens. This is a big mistake. Over and over again have I found fanciers spending big money on cocks, and mating them to inferior hens. Myself, if I had to decide between a pair of birds in which

the cock was a first-class one, and the hen a second-rater, and the pair in which the hen was a crack, and the cock only a stock bird, I should unhesitatingly go for the latter. I am fully persuaded that good dams have far more to do with the success of a strain than good sires. Type comes from the hens, and the man who is continually introducing strange hens into his loft will never have a type of his own.

As evidence of the truth of what I state, I may say that at one of our large shows a season or two back, the judge said to me when he met me after judging, "I thought that hen I have given the special to was yours, because of her beautiful ——. I know of no one who pays so much attention to those points as you do." I have purposely refrained from mentioning the two points in which the judge said this hen excelled, as I have no wish to injure the feelings of other exhibitors, or to allow them to say I have put other judges on the same track. This particular judge did not know I was exhibiting, but he knew the birds the moment his eyes rested upon them. He knew them because the type is so fixed as to give them an individuality which he could not help but notice in meeting these birds at various shows where he officiated. It is such birds we want—birds of a fixed type, no matter what variety we are breeding.

Individual excellence and ancestry are the two most important considerations in breeding stock. Individual

merit alone cannot be relied upon always, for from birds of nearly perfect standard requirements we often get a great many poor specimens. A chance good bird, with poor breeding in his blood, is a bird which should never be used. On the other hand, a bird of good breeding, whose lineage is good, will, in most cases, prove to be a valuable breeder. In my own case I have fixed the type by breeding from hens of one particular strain, and I can to-day produce in my loft daughters, grand-daughters, great-grand-daughters, and great-great-grand-daughters of certain hens. In all these birds the family likeness is very strong, showing clearly that the fixity of type has come by my sticking closely to one particular line of breeding. Nearly every bird in my loft is more or less related, some very closely, others more distantly. I keep a very careful record of the pedigrees of my birds, and thus I always know if a bird is related to any other I may wish to pair it with. It also enables me to keep my stock well in hand by avoiding too close in-breeding, or going too far outside a certain line when I am wanting a mate for some particular pet. In concluding this chapter I would again say: Never part with your best hens, and keep a faithful record of all pedigrees. If you act on these lines, you will, in a few years, establish a strain that will bring you not only fame and pleasure, but also some considerable pecuniary remuneration. Follow close pedigree breeding, and you will breed extra fine show birds, and be able to command first-class prices for those you have to sell.



**Mr. G. E. Gray's White Cock, "King of Trumps."**

1st Crystal Palace, 1st York, 1st Aquarium, 1st Ayr, &c.

## CHAPTER IV.

### The Varieties—Whites.

FIRST and foremost come the Whites. These are bred in much larger numbers than any other variety; in fact, one might almost venture to say they equal, if not surpass all other varieties put together. Till within the last few years the coloured varieties were in very few hands, and the judges gave them little encouragement; thus they were seldom seen at exhibitions, and the average individual, not seeing any other colours besides whites at the shows, had become imbued with the idea that all Fantails were white. When non-fanciers are looking over my lofts they often express astonishment at the coloured birds. "I thought all Fantails were white" is a remark I have heard scores of times. Thanks, however, to the action of the Fantail Club, the colours are now being recognised as they deserve to be, a striking proof of this being seen in the fact that Mr. G. E. Gray's grand blue cock, "King of the Blues," was, at the last Crystal Palace Show, awarded the Diamond Jubilee Challenge Cup for the best Fantail

in the show. This bird is generally acknowledged to be the most perfect Fantail yet seen. A fact of which I, his breeder, am very proud.

No long since, at the Palace Show there were three classes for whites, and one for "any other colour." Now-a-days, the Whites have six classes, and the "Any Other Colours" a baker's dozen. This change at head-quarters has reflected itself upon other shows, and it is not at all unusual now to find the coloured birds holding high positions in the prize list, even under our all-round judges. Some of these worthies will, however, not have a coloured bird at any price, and it is worse than useless to show one under them. You might as well throw your money into the street at once as waste it in entering coloured Fans under such gentlemen. Of our all-round men who do recognise the virtues of the colours, Messrs. Allsop, Lumley, and Woods are pre-eminent. This noble trio have educated themselves in the breed, and they can see, as all practical Fan breeders know from experience, that the Whites are easier to breed than the colours. The breeder of this variety has only his outward conformation, carriage, and action to get, the coloured breeder has all these to get and his colour as well, whilst, if it is a barred variety, like Blues or Silvers, or a marked variety, like Saddles, he has these extra points to obtain and put on to his Fantail, all above and beyond what the breeder of Whites has to do. This being so, it is only right that our

judges should recognise and give full value to these additional properties, instead of, as some do, putting a penalty upon them. The Fantail Club, in its standards, says that in the judging of mixed classes, the colours shall be given ten points over the whites for colour, and quite right too I hope those of our all-round men who at present can see no good in a Blue or in a Black, will "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" this fact that the Fantail Club gives coloured birds the preference over whites.

In Whites the structural properties have attained a higher degree of perfection, speaking generally, than they have in the colours. Especially is this so in carriage and tail. Having no colour or marking to bother them, white breeders have a much clearer path than the breeders of colours. Further, owing to the fact that colours have not been so popular as the whites, the latter are found in greater numbers, and in a higher state of perfection. A good White is certainly a very handsome and attractive Pigeon. With its fine, snaky head, dark hazel eye, flesh coloured cere and beak, coral legs and feet, and its lovely snow white plumage, the White Fantail is, indeed, a thing of beauty, and one which the learned in Pigeon lore can admire equally with the uninitiated.

## STANDARD FOR WHITES.

HEAD—Small, fine, and snaky, free from peak or shell.

BEAK—Thin, flesh colour, and of medium length, the upper mandible slightly curved at the tip.

BEAK WATTLE—Small, and fine in texture.

EYE—Dark hazel or bull, with very fine, flesh coloured cere. 10

NECK—Thin, nicely curved, and tapering well off as it approaches the head.

LENGTH OF NECK—Corresponding with length of back, so as to enable the head to rest closely at the base of the cushion.

BODY—Shape: Small and round.
Back: Slightly hollowed in centre.
Length of back: In proportion to length of neck, enabling the head to rest on the cushion with ease. 20
Rump: Of sufficient size and strength to balance the tail evenly.
Chest: Round like a ball.

CUSHION—Full and massive, the feathers at the front and back overlapping each other and extending well up the tail feathers.

TAIL—Slightly concave, and circular, closely filled with long, broad, evenly-set feathers, well overlapping each other. 20

LEGS—Moderately short, not stilty, and free from feathers below the hocks.

FEET—Small, fine, and neat. } 7

COLOUR OF LEGS AND FEET—Bright red.

CARRIAGE—The bird should stand on tip-toe, and walk in a jaunty manner.

Head: Thrown back in a graceful manner, resting closely on the cushion.

Chest: Upright, in a straight line with the legs.

Wings: Set on fairly low, and closely braced. 25

Flights: Just clearing the lowest tail feathers, and almost meeting at the tips.

Tail: Carried well up, not being allowed to drop or incline forward.

Legs: Well apart, the hocks being forced forward by the action of the body.

MOTION—Convulsive jerking or twitching of the neck, and apparent upheaving of the chest, the head seeming to bounce gently up and down on the cushion, with constant tremulous quivering of the body. } 8

PLUMAGE—Pure white, hard, and tight fitting. 10

100

## BLUES.

This is one of my favorite colours. To me there is something very fascinating about a Blue Fantail. The particular shade of colour I admire most is a rich, clear, lavender blue, not quite so light as the colour we often see in Owls, and not so dark as the blue of the Dragon or Homer, but a shade between the two. This colour on the body and tail, with deep glossy black wing and tail bars, is very handsome, especially so, as when the wing bars are richer in colour, the peculiar metallic sheen on the neck hackle is usually deeper in colour than when the bars are rusty or brown looking. This keeping of the bars rich and true is where some good strains fail. Body, colour, shape, carriage, and even the tail are good, but the bars are very faulty. To cure this resource must be had to a Black cross, and for such a cross I reccommend a very rich, glossy, raven black hen. My reason for crossing this way —blue cock to black hen—is because the body colour is not so likely to be affected as if a Black cock is paired with a Blue hen. With the latter cross the majority of birds so bred will throw smutty Blues for several generations; but when my plan is followed, few smutty birds show themselves—that is, if the precaution is taken not to use the cock birds so bred. I only breed from the hens of the Blue-Black cross. This deepens the bars, and has little effect upon the body colour. If, however, cocks bred from the direct Blue-Black are used, you will find the body colour much interfered with, as many birds will be smoky in colour.

**Blue Hen, "Birkenhead."**

Winner of 1st and Medal for Best Young Fantail at Birkenhead, first time shown; 1st and Spl. Pickering, 1st and Spl. Whitby, 1st and Spl. Ripon. 1st and Spl Bridlington, 2nd Dairy, 1st Crystal Palace, 1899,

Also mother of the Crystal Palace Champion of 1898.

**Bred and Exhibited by Messrs. Harmston Bros., Whitby.**

The eye in a Blue should, according to the standard, be either orange or pearl, the latter preferred. This I quite agree with. A pearl eye gives such a finished appearance to a bird. Further, the eye cere surrounding a pearl eye is invariably finer than that which adorns a red or orange eye. As to the eye cere itself, the standard issued by the Fantail Club says the cere should be dark; and dark it should be, though very few birds at present possess a dark cere; still, seeing the very rapid advance which has been made in this variety, I am hoping it will not be long ere the pearl eyes and dark ceres will be as common as the sand on the sea shore. Just now we have in the Fantail Club a few very zealous breeders, men who are determined to improve the breed, and never before in the history of the Fancy were Fantails being bred so carefully and so scientifically as they are to-day. Men who a few years ago considered the Whites the acme of perfection in Fantail breeding, and the Blues and Blacks only commoners, are now earnestly striving to breed these colours, and in one case a breeder who has been steadfast to Whites for forty years or more has caught the colour fever, and is breeding both Blues and Blacks.

One great difficulty to contend with in Blues is the tendency they have to become thick in the head and neck. This fault can be cured by an occasional White cross. Select a very fine bodied, stylish White hen, with extra good head and neck, and mate her to a Blue cock. From this cross you must, as before directed, only use the hens.

My reason for advocating a Blue cock is because nine times out of ten, the cock bird influences the colour of the progeny far more than the hen does. If you use a White cock and a Blue hen, you not only do not get such good results from a colour standpoint, but the shape of the birds is not so good. In these crosses it is advisable to get your colour from the cock, and let the hen supply the structural properties you require. If the cocks bred from this cross are used in the breeding pen, you may expect a plentiful crop of birds with light cushions and foul feathers in wings and tails. The majority of winning Blues of to-day have a lot of White blood in them, and it is continually cropping up where and when least expected. A White cross is also good when a strain shows a tendency to throw birds too dark or smutty in colour. In such a case it seems to clear the colour, taking away the impurity, and leaving the beautiful lavender blue which is generally considered the correct thing.

As I have said, only the hens from the direct Blue-White cross should be used. One should be mated back to her father, and the others to his relatives. Should any cocks in the second cross come with white splashes I should not hesitate to use them, because their veins would contain far more Blue than White blood. Of course, I would not use a very heavily splashed bird, but one light on cushion, or which had a few white feathers in wings or tail, I certainly should not reject. I would, however, strongly impress upon my readers not to use the first

cross cocks at any price. Having some second cross cocks these can be used with both the first and second cross hens, and the good features of the white birds—fineness of head and neck, and carriage—bred in and in for a season or two. Here I might say that Mr. Gray's grand Blue cock, before mentioned, was bred from a splashed hen, bred from a Blue cock and a white hen, a combination of my Whites, and the old established Dickinson strain of blues, which came into my possesion four seasons ago. His grandsire was Miss Dickinson's old Jubilee, a bird which had a very successful career in 1887-88 and 1889.

From the standard it will be seen that twenty points are given for purity and richness of colour, exactly the same number as are allotted to shape, tail, and carriage. I thoroughly agree with the standard. One of the first things I look at in a coloured bird of any kind is its colour, but, unfortunately, some of our judges are not so keen on the purity of colour, and I have seen birds holding very high positions which were really not Blues at all, but nasty, bluish-tinged Duns. Of course, I am not going to say that colour should overweigh the standard properties that go to make up an ideal Fantail, but this much I do maintain, and that is, if the standard places shape, tail, carriage, and colour on an equality, one of these, and that the most distinctive should not be lightly considered in the making of awards. Anyone who has consistently and

persistently bred for purity of colour knows only too well how hard it is to obtain, and even when obtained how hard to keep.

Dark heads, smoky coverts, light rumps and vents, rusty bars, all make their appearance, and very frequently, too, unless the breeder is constantly watching and guarding against them. The dark heads and rusty bars are, I think, the most difficult to deal with, and it requires most patient study and perseverance to overcome the tendency of a strain to throw the brownish or kitey bars. In the past, purity of colour has not received the consideration which, in my opinion, it deserves. Colour in other varieties is considered of the greatest importance, and so it ought to be in Fantails. Dragon men will have the colour in their Blues, Chequers, and Grizzles, good, and a bad coloured bird stands little chance in this variety, even although his structural properties are excellent, Tumbler, Magpie, and other breeders likewise hold the same opinion. Therefore, I hope that ere long our Fantail judges will give purity of colour the position its merits both warrant and demand. In putting birds up for breeding, these objectionable and faulty coloured points should be avoided. A nasty sooty tinge is very hard to eradicate, and white or light rumped birds perpetuate their defects with a consistency that is worthy of a better cause. To keep the colour sound and pure, pair only with the very best coloured birds to be found in the loft, should be the maxim of every breeder of colours.

## STANDARD FOR BLUES.

| | |
|---|---|
| HEAD—Small, fine, and snaky, free from peak or shell. | |
| BEAK—Thin, black, and of medium length, the upper mandible slightly curved at the tip. | |
| BEAK WATTLE—Small, and fine in texture. | |
| EYE—Pearl or orange, with very fine dark-coloured cere. | 8 |
| NECK—Thin, nicely curved, and tapering well off as it approaches the head. | |
| LENGTH OF NECK—Corresponding with length of back, so as to enable the head to rest closely at the base of the cushion. | |
| BODY—Shape: Small and round. | |
| Back: Slightly hollowed in centre. | |
| Length of back: In proportion to length of neck, enabling the head to rest on the cushion with ease. | 20 |
| Rump: Of sufficient size and strength to balance the tail evenly. | |
| Chest: Round like a ball. | |
| CUSHION—Full and massive, the feathers at the front and back overlapping each other and extending well up the tail feathers. | |
| TAIL—Slightly concave, and circular, closely filled with long, broad, evenly-set feathers, well overlapping each other. | 20 |

LEGS—Moderately short, not stilty, and free from feathers below the hocks.

FEET—Small, fine and neat.

COLOUR OF LEGS AND FEET—Bright red. } 5

CARRIAGE—The bird should stand on tip-toe, and walk in a jaunty manner.

Head: Thrown back in a graceful manner, resting closely on the cushion.

Chest: Upright, in a straight line with the legs.

Wings: Set on fairly low, and closely braced. } 20

Flights: Just clearing the lowest tail feathers, and almost meeting at the tips.

Tail: Carried well up, not being allowed to drop or incline forward.

Legs: Well apart, the hocks being forced forward by the action of the body.

MOTION—Convulsive jerking or twitching of the neck, and apparent upheaving of the chest, the head seeming to bounce gently up and down on the cushion, with constant tremulous quivering of the body. } 7

COLOUR—Clear, sound lavender blue. Free from sootiness or bronzing, and with no inclination to run light on the rump. The feathers upon the neck and throat should be covered with an iridescent metallic sheen. The wing and tail bars should be black, and well defined. The tail feathers should be edged all round with the same tint as the body colour. 20

PLUMAGE—Hard and tight fitting.

100

## BLACKS.

This is a colour to which I have devoted a great deal of attention the last six or seven years, and in the words of one of our most eminent breeders, I have during that time "increased the richness of colour, and improved the length of feather" of my stock. This certainly has been my aim, but the breeding of Blacks is not all beer and skittles. Modern fashion calls for a small bird—too small, in my opinion. Hence it is that so-called typical Blacks are few and far between. At the present moment the Blacks are far behind the Blues, in shape, size, and style. Of course, I am speaking generally. Exceptionally good Blacks have appeared now and again, and just now I believe I am in the happy position of having the best stud of this colour. Further than this, I can say that all the best Blacks of the last four or five seasons have been either

bred by myself or from birds purchased from my loft. My noted hen, Champion Lulu, had very hard lines in the first year of her existence (1896), and so had her son in 1897, but both have since shown that there are no Blacks living to touch them. Lulu has a record which no Black ever possessed before, and the splendid way in which she has lasted proves her to be as strong in constitution as she is in points. Her son, my Dairy cup cock of 1897, has never yet had his colours lowered by a Black cock, except at the last Crystal Palace Show, where he was shown far from fit, his tail having a lot of feathers in the sheath. My 1898 winner of the Challenge Bowl at the Palace was bred from a sister of Lulu, and my 1899 winner from Lulu's mother. From my Dairy Cup winner of 1897 and my Palace Challenge Bowl winner of 1898 Mrs. Sawtell produced the grand trio of young Blacks which, at the last Dairy Show, stood 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, One of them has since taken the cup at Richmond for the best Fantail, and another cup for best Pigeon in the show, whilst at the Aquarium it beat my Palace winner, which, since then, has won for me the Liverpool Challenge Cup. A year or two back the Blues were decidedly better than the Blacks, but neither 1898 nor 1899 produced a really good Blue, and in each of those years the Blacks were advancing. Taking the two colours to-day I must admit that there are more good Blacks than good Blues. I am not bold enough, however, to prophesy that this state of things will continue. In fact, if I was tempted to enter the prophetic line I should be inclined to say that 1900 or 1901 will see

the Blues once again ahead of the Blacks, notwithstanding the fact that some of our best breeders just now are paying a lot of attention to Blacks, as was evidenced by the big class of four-and-twenty youngsters at the last Palace event. The reason why I think the Blues will again head the Blacks will be found in my next paragraph. It's all a question of breeding. It's difficult, awfully difficult, to produce a Black Fantail anywhere near the ideal.

Blacks kick against the reduction in size more than any other colour. With them it seems to be a case of "so far shalt thou go, and no farther," for immediately a strain of Blacks begins to approach the ideal which is set up, disease and death make their appearance, and the labour and thought of years is rudely scattered in a very little while. They seem by nature to be meant for big, healthy, lusty birds, and when the hand of man begins to refine them, Nature says, "No, you shall not spoil my idea of beauty." My own experience tends this way, and so does that of every other breeder I have come in contact with who has tried to breed small typical Blacks. It is very hard work reducing the size of Blacks—much harder than reducing Whites or Blues. They seem to grow big and lusty naturally, and when you do get what you think will prove an eye-opener at the Palace—well, it's a hundred to one you don't get it through the moult. It is no use attempting to breed Blacks unless you are blessed with a lot of patience and a superabundant share of perseverance, as both will be greatly tried ere you breed a really tip-top specimen. For

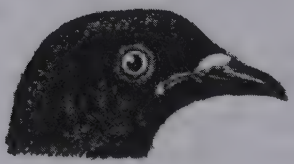
the man who can successfully combine colour, shape, style, length of feather, and small bodies in Blacks there is a big future. This being so, the variety offers great scope for young and enterprising fanciers. The race is not always to the swift, nor the spoils to the strong, therefore, the novice is just as likely to lick the old hands as not; in fact, a few seasons back, breeding with only two pairs of Blacks, Mr. R. Stuart-Murray was in the money with youngsters every time he exhibited. Again, look at the marvellous success which has attended the efforts of Mrs. Sawtell. To stand first, second, and third at the Dairy in the second season's breeding was a wonderful performance, and one that will doubtless constitute a record for a long series of years.

The colour desired in Blacks is a deep, glossy, jet black, covered with a rich beetle green sheen. The only colour to which I can compare it is that after which Black Hamburgh breeders so steadfastly strive. There must be no rustiness nor chequery appearance, but a good, solid depth of colour. This great depth of colour takes a lot of breeding, and that this is so is clearly shown by the very large number of birds that look rusty or chequery in colour. Did I speak of other breeders' stocks it might be thought that I was trying to injure them by comparison, and as "comparisons are odious," I will only compare the two young hens that I myself exhibited in the season 1896-7. One of these was very small, and full of style, but failed in colour, and also in strength of tail; the

other was of magnificent colour, grand shape, had a beautiful tail, but did not possess quite so much style, The latter, in my opinion, was far and away the better bird of the two, yet both at the Palace and at Liverpool the bad coloured, small tailed bird beat the other. This tendency on the part of judges to give so much more weight to style than colour has caused many breeders to get careless in the matter of breeding for colour. Little thought has been given to what I hold to be the cardinal feature, and instead of rich, lustrous birds being paired one to the other, quite the reverse has been done, and the result has been that the country is flooded with a lot of chequery, bad coloured specimens,

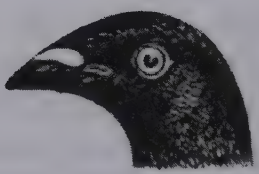
In breeding Blacks, the very best coloured birds possible must be paired together if long-standing satisfaction is required. If a strain has been allowed to get down in colour, a cross with a white will improve it. This seems queer, but it is so, and I have proved it more than once. Blacks, generally speaking, are coarser in eye cere than the other varieties. Many good birds have very large, coarse ceres, which also are very pale in colour. I have found that the White cross before mentioned has not only improved the body colour, but it has also deepened the colour of the eye cere, and made it finer and more glove-like. In making this cross, the cock should be the Black, and the hen the White, for exactly the same reasons as I mentioned when speaking of the Blue-White cross. One curious feature of this Black-White cross is that you get

very few foul feathered birds in the second cross, owing, I suppose, to the greater strength of the Black. This Black-White cross must be handled in exactly the same way as the Blue-White cross if success is to be attained. With this chapter I give illustrations of three different types of head, sketched from life from Black Fantails in



1.

2.



3.

my possession. No. 1 does not look very prepossessing on paper, but on the bird it has the slim, snaky, appearance which is so greatly coveted. It is from the best headed bird I have in my loft. No. 2 is not flat enough on the top, whilst No. 3 is too Homery altogether. I have introduced these heads here because the Blacks differ in head more than any other colour. Some may, perhaps, think that No. 1 is not a typical head. I will tell them

**Black Hen, "Jet."**

Winner of 1st and 20 guinea Challenge Cup, Crystal Palace, 1st and 10 guinea Challenge Cup, Liverpool, &c.

The only Black which has won two Challenge Cups.

**Bred and Exhibited by Mr. C. A. House.**

how to prove otherwise. Catch the most snaky-headed bird you have, and hold its neck between your first and second fingers, and you will find that it is as much like No. 1 as it is possible for anything to be. The head of a good Fantail is flat on the top, and is chopped off almost square behind, and looks very different in the hand to what it does when thrown back on the cushion ; in fact, the difference is so great as to make one wonder if it really is possible for a change of position to alter the appearance of the contour so greatly. I must confess that the preparation of these sketches astonished me, as the head which looks best on the bird is far from having the nicest appearance on paper.

## STANDARD FOR BLACKS.

| | |
|---|---|
| HEAD—Small, fine, and snaky, free from peak or shell. | |
| BEAK—Thin, black, and of medium length, the upper mandible slightly curved at the tip. | |
| BEAK WATTLE—Small and fine in texture. | |
| EYE—Pearl or orange, with very fine, dark-coloured cere. | 8 |
| NECK—Thin, nicely curved, and tapering well off as it approaches the head. | |
| LENGTH OF NECK—Corresponding with length of back, so as to enable the head to rest closely at the base of the cushion. | |
| BODY—Shape: Small and round. | |
| Back: Slightly hollowed in centre. | |
| Length of back: In proportion to length of neck, enabling the head to rest on the cushion with ease. | 20 |
| Rump: Of sufficient size and strength to balance the tail evenly. | |
| Chest: Round like a ball. | |
| CUSHION—Full and massive, the feathers at the front and back overlapping each other and extending well up the tail feathers. | |
| TAIL—Slightly concave and circular, closely filled with long, broad, evenly-set feathers, well overlapping each other. | 20 |

LEGS—Moderately short, not stilty, and free from feathers below the hocks.

FEET—Small, fine and neat. 5

COLOUR OF LEGS AND FEET—Bright red.

CARRIAGE—The bird should stand on tip-toe, and walk in a jaunty manner.

Head: Thrown back in a graceful manner, resting closely on the cushion.

Chest: Upright, in a straight line with the legs.

Wings: Set on fairly low, and closely braced. 20

Flights: Just clearing the lowest tail feathers, and almost meeting at the tips.

Tail: Carried well up, not being allowed to drop or incline forward.

Legs: Well apart, the hocks being forced forward by the action of the body.

MOTION—Convulsive jerking or twitching of the neck, and apparent upheaving of the chest, the head seeming to bounce gently up and down on the cushion, with constant tremulous quivering of the body. 7

COLOUR—Jet black throughout, free from rustiness, or a chequery appearance, and covered with a rich beetle green lustre. 20

PLUMAGE—Hard and tight fitting.

100

## REDS AND YELLOWS.

I put these two colours together for the simple reason that they are always classified together in our schedules, further, the Reds and Yellows are so wrapt up and inter-bred together, that it is impossible to separate them. In writing of these colours it is difficult to say much about them from the simple fact that so little is known of them. Till quite recently they have been in two or three hands, and even at the last Palace Show, only seven exhibitors of Reds and Yellows were represented in the two classes given to these varieties. One of these, Mr. R. Stuart-Murray, has for years towered head and shoulders above everyone else in these colours. By his victory in November, two years ago, he won outright the challenge cup of the club for these breeds having taken it three times in succession. Some may say there is not much merit in the feat he accomplished, owing to the lack of competition, and that one win in either of the other colours betokens more real merit than ten in Reds and Yellows. There may be something in the argument, still, it must be remembered that the fault is not Mr. Murray's. He has shown, and shown to win; if others had done ditto the cup would not now be resting upon his sideboard. Further, it greatly redounds to his credit to say that each year since he commenced with these colours he has produced better birds than in previous years, excepting, I think, 1897 and 1899. Last season, he removed his stock to a new loft, and every fancier who has been through the ordeal knows only too well that a removal upsets things a

bit. It certainly upset Mr. Murray's loft, and broke his long sequence of successes. At the Palace he was beaten in both classes by Mr. C. Fuller-Russell. Still, although beaten, he had the gratification of knowing that he was beaten by birds of his own breeding and their descendants. Another point worthy of note in connection with the Blair Athol loft, is the fact that Mr. Murray, some time since, sold his 1896 Challenge Cup winning Yellow to an American fancier for the nice little figure of £25. This was a genuine transaction, and it is one that should do much to increase the interest felt in Reds and Yellows, besides creating an undoubted record in the matter of prices in Fantail circles.

In commencing to breed Red and Yellow Fantails, the breeder is met at the start by the great difficulty of finding suitable crossing material. The Black-Red cross, so much used by breeders of other varieties, is of little, if any help, to the lover of Red and Yellow Fans., from the fact that in most Pigeons the Black colour is of a purplish character, but Fantail breeders have for years been trying to breed Blacks with plenty of deep green beetle sheen, and those who know anything at all about the blending of colours know well that green and red is not the best mixture under the sun, neither is it one likely to bring about beneficial results in the breeding pen. This, doubtless, is a great stumbling-block to Red and Yellow breeders, but as the club, in its latest standards, demands, and that in no uncertain manner, that this beetle-green sheen shall be a *sine qua non* of the

exhibition Black, so it will, I suppose, have to be the *bete noir* or stumbling-block of the Reds and Yellows.

Seeing there is this difficulty in crossing with the Blacks—and those who have tried it know it, from the fact that the vents, rumps, cushions, and tails come very ashy and dun-looking in colour—from whence is the breeder of Reds and Yellows to improve and build up his stock? In my opinion, from the Saddles. There are some good coloured red Saddles to be found, and in these I am persuaded is to be found the salvation of the Red and Yellow breeders.

Another curious feature in connection with these colours is that it seems almost impossible to obtain a Yellow cock. All the Yellows, with one exception, which I have come across have been hens, and I have been told by those who have made a special study of Reds and Yellows, that it invariably is so. This, I have no doubt, will be overcome in time, and once it is the colour will be improved. At present, breeders seem unable to breed any other way than Red cock to Yellow hen, and thus are somewhat handicapped in their efforts. I have done a little in this way, but only a little, very little, and it is my opinion that Mr. Murray knows more about the breeding of Reds and Yellows than all the other breeders in the kingdom put together. One good resulting from Mr. Murray's defeat at the last Palace Show has been the

encouragement it has given other breeders to bend a bow with him, and I am quite expecting to see Reds and Yellows not only greatly improve in quality, but also largely increase in number during the next season or two.

Writing on the breeding of Reds and Yellows Mr. Rutter, an American fancier, says :—"One ardent fancier has tried to graft White Fantail points upon his Reds by direct crosses. The first issues of this mating were quite unexpected. A few Blacks slightly marked with white cropped up among the Red Splashes, and type was scattered to the four winds. On crossing the best Splashes (regardless of colour) back to true Reds, some mismarked Reds were bred; and by further infusion of red blood the sought for colour finally came, but the Fantail qualities of the white crosses were practically gone. So much red was needed to overcome the white feather that when the rich chestnut hue was secured, the too dilute White strain had no power to produce its typical merits. After a series of breeding tests I feel quite sure that Reds can best be improved by aid of dark colours. Early in 1896 a fancier friend generously sent me a Red Fantail cock, good in body colour, bluish in tail, and fair in type. This Red had both Yellow and Black blood in his veins, and was paired to a black hen. During 1896 the Red cock and Black hen bred a Dun hen of unusual tail area, and moderate style. This Dun hen is almost a chequer and faintly shows dingy bars across her wing. To mate her I purchased a deep colour, stylish Yellow cock.

This Yellow cock during 1898 sired twelve youngsters. Seven were Yellow and five Dun. As is often the case when a raw cross is tried, most of the birds showing Fantail merits were cocks. In truth, but one hen, a Yellow, was good enough to go on with. This last Yellow hen is now breeding with the red cock, her grandfather, and at this writing has produced three 1898 Reds. The elder squeaker has real deep body colour, but runs slaty in the tail after the fashion of its father. The younger couple have the true ruddy shading over every feather from top to toe. Without being too exact, the inside colouring of these Reds may be divided nearly as follows:—Red five-eighths, Yellow two-eighths, Black one-eighth. Now since the Red sire has one-fourth Black in his own system, these baby Reds actually are about one-fourth Black in blood. From the above facts it seems fair to assume that Black and Yellow added in equal parts are likely to make Red more intense. Yellow alone usually produces Reds of a washed out mealy hue. Blue or Dun tailed Reds quite often spring from the influx of Black blood. In theory Red seems to stand midway between Yellow and Black although the two latter colours when crossed frequently throw Duns. Hence it is probable that an exact half and half mixture of Yellow and Black would result in red of royal lustre. The primary barrier across the path of this direct cross is the present lack of sound Yellows. While our this day class of Yellows has certainly gained in typical Fantail points, the rich orange hue of twenty years ago is rarely seen. Not for one moment would I try to put

colour ahead of type, but the standard calls for both, and fanciers must ever be on guard against neglecting either.

Mr. Rutter also argues that because Canarymen breed Green birds to Yellow to improve colour, so the Black blood imported into yellow Fantails will improve them. As an old Canary breeder I can say that Mr. Rutter's argument is dangerous and deceptive. There is no comparison between the yellow of the Canary and the yellow of the Fantail. One is a hard, bright, glossy colour, the other soft. Again the yellow of the Canary has been standing for hundreds of years, and breeds easily and truly, and not as Mr. Rutter says "is bothersome to keep." His arguments are not based on experience either in Canary or Fantail breeding. I have long experience of both, and where Mr. Rutter says—"I think Duns will assist," I unhesitatingly say they will destroy.

I trust no English fanciers will follow the fallacious advice of Mr. Rutter. One swallow never made a summer, and his one experiment does not prove that the particular cross he recommends will lead to success. As I have before pointed out, and which Mr. Rutter admits, the rumps and tails come very ashy in colour when black blood is used. He, however, omits to state that every succeeding moult finds them worse. The theory which he advances as to a Yellow and Black producing Reds is too ridiculous to be seriously entertained. Anyone with any knowledge at all of colour breeding knows that red is a fairly hard colour

whilst yellow is a soft one, and one which will blend with almost any other colour. I will admit, however, if the Yellows are Red-bred then such a result might come about. Pair Whites and Reds together and you get Splashes, the same with Whites and Blacks, and even Blues, but with Yellows it is quite the reverse. Whites and Yellows will produce more Creams than anything else, though the White is a hard colour. Yellows and Blues are both soft and blend readily, producing Creams and Silvers, whilst the veriest tyro knows that the way to produce Duns is to blend Reds and Blacks. This being so, how is it possible to breed good sound Reds and Yellows from Blacks? It might be done with years and years of crossing, but the way will be long and the road hard. Further, it is quite opposed to the results obtained by the champion Red and Yellow breeder of the world—Mr. R. S. Murray—who has tried the Black cross, and found it wanting. It produces good Fantails, but it is useless so far as colour production is concerned. What we want is Reds and Yellows sound all through, and for this reason I say avoid the Black blood as you would poison. The reason why is to be found in the green sheen before mentioned.

In founding a strain of Reds and Yellows, I should advise the pairing together of two or three pairs of really good Reds and Yellows, as well-matched as possible, and an equal number of Red self cocks to Red saddle hens. Starting in such a way, shape, colour, style and action are

all likely to be obtained by a few seasons of careful crossing. In pairing the selfs and saddles, at all times let the self be the cock bird, and thus keep down the tendency of your stock to produce splashes. Further, by such crossing you will improve the shape, carriage, and action of your stock, as saddles have more style than any of the varieties, and it is hard to beat them in shape. The general lines of crossing and pairing given in connection with Blues and Blacks must also be followed in connection with these colours. It is most essential that the colour be kept up, and I would urge upon every breeder to look well to this point. A good sound, rich, golden-chestnut red takes some getting, and, when obtained, can very easily be lost unless carefully watched. In the Yellows we want a bright, warm, golden colour, not the cold, hard yellow that is seen in some birds. Quite recently I was looking through a loft of red and yellow tumblers, and was particularly struck by the variation and difference of shades to be found therein. This is fatal to success. A breeder of Reds and Yellows must keep his colour fountain full if he wishes to be successful, and the red saddles judiciously mixed with the red selfs will keep it full up and running over. The Reds and Yellows are, undoubtedly, most fascinating birds, and many fanciers are falling victims to their charms. This being so, I have no doubt that ere long we shall see them quite on a level with the Blues and Blacks.

## STANDARD FOR REDS.

| | |
|---|---|
| HEAD—Small, fine, and snaky, free from peak or shell. | |
| BEAK—Thin, flesh-coloured, and of medium length, the upper mandible slightly curved at the tip. | |
| BEAK WATTLE—Small and fine in texture. | |
| EYE—Orange, with very fine, flesh-coloured cere. | 8 |
| NECK—Thin, nicely curved, and tapering well off as it approaches the head. | |
| LENGTH OF NECK—Corresponding with length of back, so as to enable the head to rest closely at the base of the cushion. | |
| BODY—Shape: Small and round. | |
| Back: Slightly hollowed in centre. | |
| Length of back: In proportion to length of neck, enabling the head to rest on the cushion with ease. | 20 |
| Rump: Of sufficient size and strength to balance the tail evenly. | |
| Chest: Round like a ball. | |
| CUSHION—Full and massive, the feathers at the front and back overlapping each other and extending well up the tail feathers. | |
| TAIL—Slightly concave and circular, closely filled with long, broad, evenly-set feathers, well overlapping each other. | 20 |

LEGS—Moderately short, not stilty, and free from feathers below the hocks.
FEET—Small, fine, and neat.
COLOUR OF LEGS AND FEET—Bright red. 5

CARRIAGE—The bird should stand on tip-toe, and walk in a jaunty manner.
Head: Thrown back in a graceful manner, resting closely on the cushion.
Chest: Upright, in a straight line with the legs.
Wings: Set on fairly low, and closely braced.
Flights: Just clearing the lowest tail feathers, and almost meeting at the tips.
Tail: Carried well up, not being allowed to drop or incline forward.
Legs: Well apart, the hocks being forced forward by the action of the body. 20

MOTION—Convulsive jerking or twitching of the neck, and apparent upheaving of the chest, the head seeming to bounce gently up and down on the cushion, with constant tremulous quivering of the body. 7

COLOUR—Clear, rich, bright golden-chestnut, free from sootiness or any tendency to a bluish tint. The feathers upon the neck and throat should be covered with an iridescent metallic sheen. 20

PLUMAGE—Hard, and tight fitting.

100

The Standard for Yellows is the same as Reds, excepting that the colour must be "rich, bright, golden yellow."

## DUNS.

The Duns are very few in number at present, and are likely to stay so for a long time, as no one seems to care particularly for them, and the standard for the variety was only framed with a view to encourage their propagation. Duns are, as the veriest tyro knows, a natural outcome of red and black crosses, and, for this reason, I venture to think they will never become very popular, as the red-black cross is not either desirable or effectual from the standpoint of either red or black breeders. Notwithstanding this, I have no doubt that as time rolls on, the reds, yellows, blacks, and blues will have become so numerous and so highly cultivated that enterprising spirits desirous of fresh worlds to conquer will turn their attention to the Duns.

## STANDARD FOR DUNS.

| | |
|---|---|
| HEAD—Small, fine, and snaky, free from peak or shell. | |
| BEAK—Thin, black, and of medium length, the upper mandible slightly curved at the tip. | |
| BEAK WATTLE—Small, and fine in texture. | |
| EYE—Orange, with very fine drab-coloured cere. | 8 |
| NECK—Thin, nicely curved, and tapering well off as it approaches the head. | |
| LENGTH OF NECK—Corresponding with length of back, so as to enable the head to rest closely at the base of the cushion. | |
| BODY—Shape: Small and round. | |
| Back: Slightly hollowed in centre. | |
| Length of back: In proportion to length of neck, enabling the head to rest on the cushion with ease. | 20 |
| Rump: Of sufficient size and strength to balance the tail evenly. | |
| Chest: Round like a ball. | |
| CUSHION—Full and massive, the feathers at the front and back overlapping each other and extending well up the tail feathers. | |
| TAIL—Slightly concave, and circular, closely filled with long, broad, evenly-set feathers, well overlapping each other. | 20 |

LEGS—Moderately short, not stilty, and free from feathers below the hocks.

FEET—Small, fine and neat.

COLOUR OF LEGS AND FEET—Bright red. } 5

CARRIAGE—The bird should stand on tip-toe, and walk in a jaunty manner.

Head: Thrown back in a graceful manner, resting closely on the cushion.

Chest: Upright, in a straight line with the legs.

Wings: Set on fairly low, and closely braced. } 20

Flights: Just clearing the lowest tail feathers, and almost meeting at the tips.

Tail: Carried well up, not being allowed to drop or incline forward.

Legs: Well apart, the hocks being forced forward by the action of the body.

MOTION—Convulsive jerking or twitching of the neck, and apparent upheaving of the chest; the head seeming to bounce gently up and down on the cushion, with constant tremulous quivering of the body. } 7

COLOUR—A soft, even shade of dull reddish-brown, without any tendency to a purple or bluish tint. The feathers upon the neck and throat should be covered with an iridescent metallic sheen. } 20

PLUMAGE—Hard and tight fitting.

100

## SILVERS.

Silvers are a variety that, as yet, are in their infancy. I have never yet, excepting once at the Crystal Palace some four or five years ago, seen a really good Silver. I forget by whom it was exhibited, but never before nor since have I seen one so closely approaching, in colour and points, my ideal. This last season several so-called Silvers made their appearance at the Dairy, Palace, and Liverpool, but the least said about their colour the better, yet in Fantail points they were very good—shape, style, and tail all being there. The best coloured bird which has been seen was the one exhibited by Messrs. Havemeyer at the Palace, but it was very poor in Fantail properties. Could its colour have been grafted on to Mr. Harrower's youngster which came out at the Aquarium, then we should have had a really good Silver Fantail. The Silvers which have appeared have no doubt been off-shoots from the Blues. The variety is one that would pay any enterprising

breeder to go in for. At present there is practically a clear field, no one having any birds worthy of being called Silver Fantails. There is plenty of material at hand which could be utilised, and all that is required is a little time and patience. A few Blues and Whites carefully crossed with some Yellows would, I feel persuaded, soon produce a strain of Silvers capable of holding their own against the other, and more popular, colours. Very soft pale-coloured Blues and Yellows should be used, and the Blue should always be the cock, whether crossed with a White or a Yellow. From experiments I have made myself in this way, I should recommend the following crosses for a start:—No. 1, two very pale Blues; No. 2, pale Blue cock, and White hen; No. 3, pale Blue cock and soft pale-coloured Yellow hen. From No. 1 pen it is quite possible some of the youngsters would be even paler than the parents. From No. 2 you are likely to get some pale Blues and some splashes; if these latter are hens keep them, but kill all splashed cocks. The birds from No. 3 may be some Blue, and some of a light greyish-cream colour. Hens of this last colour crossed in with the cocks from Nos. 2 and 3 will produce birds getting nearer the desired goal, and by careful manipulation in the third year some fair Silvers should be obtained. Seeing that whilst breeding these birds up for colour, a certain percentage of body, feather, and carriage properties will be lost, I advise that the Blues, Whites, and Yellows with which the start is made should be of the highest class. It will then be very easy, after the colour is fixed, to restore what points

have been lost in the efforts after colour. I have this season bred several very smart Silvers, as Silvers go, but they are a long way from the other colours yet.

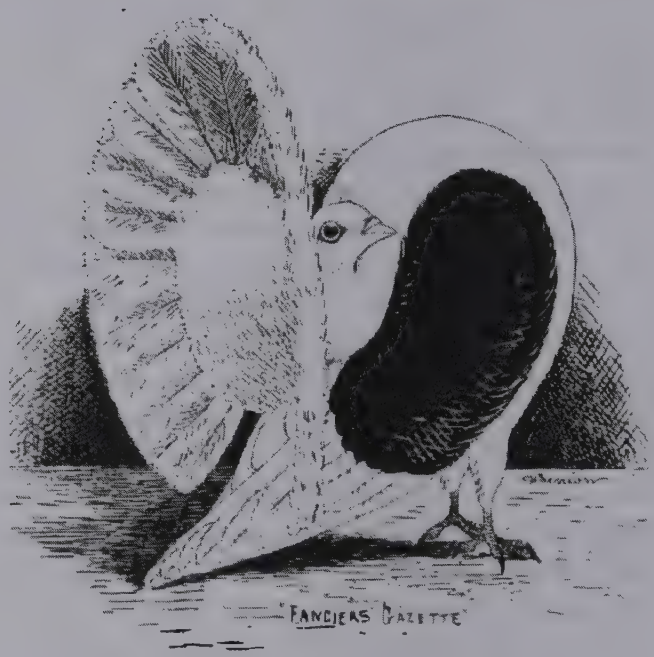
The Standard for Silvers is the same as Duns, except that the eye must be pearl, and the body colour of "a soft, even shade of a very light silvery-grey tint, with no tendency to a creamy colour."

## LACES.

This peculiar branch of the Fantail family seems only to just exist. Its followers do not grow in number, and it looks very much as though the variety will, ere long, die out. The points in the Laces are the same as in all the other varieties, excepting that the feathers must all be disunited in the web, and frilled after the fashion of a Silky Fowl. I have seen some very pretty Blue Laces, but the Whites, somehow or other, always seem, to my eye, to be dreadfully bedraggled and untidy creatures. Their plumage seems to catch all the dirt flying about, and thus they are generally most unkempt-looking objects. To those who are fond of oddities the Laced Fantail presents opportunities.

If any of my readers wish to devote themselves to the breeding of these odd-looking members of the columbarian race, there is a very open field for them. At present the variety is in few hands, and the prices asked for birds are not at all exorbitant. The beginner in Laces need only

purchase one pair of Laces to start a couple of breeding pens. The Lace cock should be paired to an ordinary plain-feathered hen Fantail, and the same plan adopted with the Lace hen, which should be paired to a plain-feathered cock. In the past, breeders of these peculiar looking birds have often paired Lace to Lace. This is a big mistake. Only one of the pair should be a laced bird. By this system the fibre of the feather will be kept more tenacious, the tail formation will be better, the body properties more in keeping with standard requirements, and if it is White Laces that are being bred, the colour will also be better. From my experience as a breeder of Frizzled Bantams, I am fully persuaded that the only way to improve the Laced Fantail is to breed upon the lines I have here laid down. Of late years, with one exception, nothing has been seen of coloured Laces. All the birds of the variety which have been exhibited have been Whites. This, however, could very soon be altered if plain-feathered blue, black, and other coloured cocks were paired to white laced hens. The youngsters from these should be judiciously mated up again, some to their parents, and some to their own brothers and sisters. Thus, in a year or two, very decent coloured Laces might be produced. At the last Aquarium Show Mr. Buttress exhibited a black-splashed Lace, a very decent bird indeed, and, in my opinion, much more handsome than the Whites. The Laces are down. It will need a large amount of perseverance, pluck, and patience to bring them up to a high level again. Where is the fancier possessing




**Black Saddle Hen, "Fairyland."**

Winner of 1st Crystal Palace.

**Breeder, Mr. John M'Lauchlin, Stranraer, N.B.**

the needed qualities? If he can be found, success is sure to attend his efforts.

## SADDLES.

These are, indeed, amongst the most interesting and fascinating of the Fantail varieties. The would-be breeder of tip-top Saddles has not only to get shape, carriage, tail, action, and colour, but on top of all he has to get markings, and that these take some getting few will deny who have ever tried their hand at Saddle breeding. In its latest edition of standards the Fantail Club recognises the difficulty breeders of these birds labour under, and instructs its judges that ten extra points are to be given to Saddles for marking, and five for colour, when compared with the Whites. What is there more handsome than a correctly marked, good coloured, typical shaped, sound tailed, stylish Saddle Fantail? Very few birds can be compared to such a paragon of beauty. A beauty which, in the eyes of the practical breeder, is still further enhanced by the great difficulty in obtaining it. About the best bird of this variety ever seen is the noted hen, "Champion Ruby," bred by that enthusiastic lover of Saddles, Mr. W. Stevenson. For colour, marking, and general Fantail properties, this hen, when in her prime, has never yet been beaten.

I do not think there is any other generally known variety of Pigeon that is in so few hands as is the Saddle Fantail. The breeders who are known as successful

exhibitors of Saddles are very few indeed; in fact, one could almost count them on one's fingers. As with the breeders so with the birds—good ones are like angels' visits, "few and far between," and it is only in very recent years that even passably decent specimens have been exhibited at our shows. Now, however, there are some almost, if not quite, as good in general Fantail properties as are the Whites and Self colours. I certainly wonder not a little at this state of things, although there are matters in connection with the breeding of this variety that have to be endured before they can be appreciated. Difficulties and disappointments meet the breeder at every turn, enough to daunt even the most determined and resourceful of breeders. Looking at a Saddle Fan in the show pen, with its dress clothes on, is one thing, and seeing it at home in its everyday suit is another. Perfectly clean bodied specimens are quite the exception and not the rule. Thus, when a well-marked, clean bodied bird makes its appearance in the pen, the knowing ones have strong misgivings as to its authenticity. In nine cases out of ten such a bird has been dressed. This dressing is an acknowledged fact amongst Saddle exhibitors, and is generally allowed, as they all do it. In fact, unless it is done an exhibitor would not show one bird out of a hundred bred.

This dressing in an average clean bodied bird is quite beyond detection, as, unless the bird is very badly mismarked, the operator himself could not say from where

he had extracted feathers on the neck, chest, belly, thighs, and vent. Amongst Fantail breeders this dressing is considered perfectly legitimate, because it does not interfere with any structural property of the bird operated upon. I hardly know what the upholders of the Pigeon Club's famous Rule III. would say about the matter, but this much is certain—so long as Saddle Fans are shown, so long will the art of dressing them prevail. Foul feathers are not a disqualification, but as the birds look better without them of course they come out. If nothing but perfectly natural marked Saddles were allowed to be shown, the Saddle classes would soon become a thing of the past, as a Saddle in its every-day clothes is far from being a thing of beauty; or, if foul feathers were a disqualification, the Saddles would soon drop out of existence, as not one in a hundred is bred without a few foul feathers somewhere or other about its body. In the breeding of Saddles we have to learn to possess our souls in patience.

How often is it the experience of the Saddle breeder, when he has succeeded in getting a youngster grand in Fantail properties, sound coloured on shoulders, almost clean on breast and under body, to find it sport a couple or perhaps more coloured feathers right in the centre of the tail, which, in all cases, should be pure white? Again, he gets them with clean necks and bodies as well as tails good, in fact, excellent in all-round Fantail properties, yet has the mortification of seeing them come out of the nest badly bishoped on one or both shoulders, or worse yet,

perhaps, a couple of coloured feathers in the wing primaries. Then, mayhap, he gets a specimen as near perfectly marked as possible in the nest, raising his hopes to the seventh heaven by making him think he has bred a champion of champions, only to find those same hopes dashed to the ground when his marvellous squab becomes developed, by finding that so far as good general Fantail properties are concerned the bird is a literal waster, and will never be fit to grace a show pen with any chance of winning, notwithstanding all its superb markings. These difficulties I have here enumerated in the breeding of Saddle Fantails are only a few that beset the breeders of this variety.

Astute Saddle breeders, of course, in their matings year by year, use their judgment and knowledge to the best advantage in mating for correct markings, combined with other properties, yet, how often do they get fooled in the markings of the progeny, and this after a long experience at the game. I have come to the conclusion that there is a considerable amount of what some would call luck or haphazard chance work in the breeding of Saddles, although even here patient continuance in well-doing gets its reward. I have known many very well-marked Saddles that have been bred from indifferently marked parents, and about as perfectly a marked Saddle I ever saw was produced from a badly mis-marked Saddle cock and a pure white hen—saddle-bred, of course, hence the vagaries of fickle fortune. Yet some strains throw

birds much clearer than others. In 1896, at the Crystal Palace Show, I won what is the most valued trophy I possess, the silver cup given by the late George Ure for the best Saddle in the show, with a red hen an illustration of which accompanies this chapter. This hen was naturally very clean, and every bird I bred from her sire had few, if any, foul feathers about the body. This cock afterwards passed into the possession of Messrs. Lee & Gray, and their experience was the same as mine, his youngsters all came remarkably clear. With all the foregoing thrown in, there is nothing in the whole of the Fantail Fancy more engrossing than the breeding of Saddles.

The very uncertainty attendant upon it only lends zest to the breeding operations year after year, and when one succeeds in getting a real tip-topper, like the beforementioned Champion Ruby of Mr. Stevenson's, the red cock which won the challenge cup for Messrs. Harmston two years since, or Mr. Lee's lovely black which annexed the same trophy at the last Palace fixture, one can afford to feel proud of one's achievement, and crow a little about it. It is the performance of a lifetime. There is simply no comparison, as far as interest goes, in the breeding of White Fans with Saddles.

Saddle breeding has made much progress within the last few years, and many of the Saddles now possess tail properties on an equality with our best Whites, and are equally prominent in shape and style. At one time they

lacked neatness and spread of tail to the Whites, but not so now. To gain that point, a cross with the Whites had to be resorted to, with the result that the Saddles of to-day are not quite so good in body, although better in all round properties than they were a few years back. Saddle breeders have now secured more length and spread of feather, and they will, doubtless, soon reduce the size of body again.

In the breeding of Saddles the great difficulty of course is to get the markings correct and true. The standard says only the wings and back should be marked, but very few birds are bred that come anywhere near such a description. Foul feathers appear about the neck and body of most birds, whilst a large majority of good shoulder-marked birds have foul thighs; in fact, it is a general rule that the better the wing marking the more liability there is to foul thighs. On the other hand birds that are not well marked, or rather I should say deficient, or bishoped in wing marking are generally pretty clear of foul feathers about the thighs. Had I to choose between these two great drawbacks, I should prefer the bird with good wings and foul thighs, as, in my opinion, a bishoped wing is a greater fault than a dark or a foul thigh. In breeding, two dark thighed birds should not be paired together if it can possibly be avoided, as it is a fault which has a tendency to increase rather than diminish. The same applies to birds badly marked about the head, neck, and breast, there ever seems a tendency on the part of the

coloured feathers to over-run the white plumage. Thus in breeding, great care should be used in matching birds, and a bishoped bird should be mated to one with good solid shoulders, and a bird failing at thighs to one extra clean in body.

Colour, too, must be rigidly watched, as, owing to the white blood present, it has a great inclination to deteriorate. In Saddles, the Reds and Blacks cross well, owing, no doubt, to the white blood assisting to keep each colour clear, and the depth of both of these colours is improved by an occasional cross. These two colours are the most popular, but the most charming colour of all in Saddles is, in my opinion, Yellow, and, strange to say, it is the most difficult to breed. Several of my Scottish friends have been trying for years to turn out a real good Yellow, but I have never yet seen one in the show pen, although I certainly did see one at Beith once, when visiting at Janefield, but, alas, like all the good ones, it died young. "Its beauty," which was great, "blossomed but to die." Still, Willie is plodding on, and assures me that he will turn out a tip-top Yellow Saddle ere he dies, if he possibly can.

Blue Saddles, also, are most beautiful to look upon, yet are few in number. The great impediment to success with these seems to be the getting of cock birds. Blue Saddle cocks are, generally speaking, very big and coarse. If a careful course of breeding were followed by pairing

Blue cocks to Black hens, and then pairing the progeny up together, I think this difficulty would soon be overcome. There are plenty of small Black Saddle hens in the Fancy, and if these were mated to Blue cocks and then the progeny paired back like I advised in the Self colours, I feel confident we should soon have some good Blue Saddles.

The great drawback to the extension of the Saddle Fancy is the difficulty of obtaining really good stock. First-class birds are few and far between, and command high prices. Add to this the great uncertainty which exists in breeding, and it is easily seen why Saddle fanciers are limited in number. In this nineteenth century hurry and scramble for existence, few can be found to sit down quietly and wait year after year for the results which never come. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick," said Solomon of old, but even he, I guess, knew little of the hopes of success wrecked, and visions of glory dashed to the ground time after time in the career of a Saddle breeder. Had he been a breeder of Saddle Fantails, I am inclined to think he would have doubly written, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity," for there is little to cheer the Saddle breeder on in his aspirations towards the goal of perfection, excepting the knowledge that patient continuance in well-doing merits its own reward.

## STANDARD FOR SADDLES.

| | |
|---|---|
| HEAD—Small, fine, and snaky, free from peak or shell. | |
| BEAK—Thin, flesh-coloured, and of medium length, the upper mandible slightly curved at the tip. | |
| BEAK WATTLE—Small and fine in texture. | |
| EYE—Dark hazel or bull, with very fine, flesh-coloured cere. | 7 |
| NECK—Thin, nicely curved, and tapering well off as it approaches the head. | |
| LENGTH OF NECK—Corresponding with length of back, so as to enable the head to rest closely at the base of the cushion. | |
| BODY—Shape: Small and round. | |
| Back: Slightly hollowed in centre. | |
| Length of back: In proportion to length of neck, enabling the head to rest on the cushion with ease. | 20 |
| Rump: Of sufficient size and strength to balance the tail evenly. | |
| Chest: Round like a ball. | |
| CUSHION—Full and massive, the feathers at the front and back overlapping each other and extending well up the tail feathers. | 20 |
| TAIL—Slightly concave and circular, closely filled with long, broad, evenly-set feathers, well overlapping each other. | |
| LEGS—Moderately short, not stilty, and free from feathers below the hocks. | 5 |
| FEET—Small, fine, and neat. | |
| COLOUR OF LEGS AND FEET—Bright red. | |

| | |
|---|---|
| CARRIAGE—The bird should stand on tip-toe, and walk in a jaunty manner.<br>Head: Thrown back in a graceful manner, resting closely on the cushion.<br>Chest: Upright, in a straight line with the legs.<br>Wings: Set on fairly low, and closely braced.<br>Flights: Just clearing the lowest tail feathers, and almost meeting at the tips.<br>Tail: Carried well up, not being allowed to drop or incline forward.<br>Legs: Well apart, the hocks being forced forward by the action of the body. | 17 |
| MOTION—Convulsive jerking or twitching of the neck, and apparent upheaving of the chest, the head seeming to bounce gently up and down on the cushion, with constant tremulous quivering of the body. | 5 |
| MARKINGS—The wings should be marked evenly, the ten outside feathers being white, the rest, including the covert or scapular feathers, to be coloured; the body, excepting the back, to be white; in the barred varieties the wing bars to be clear and distinct. | 20 |
| COLOUR—To be clear and rich throughout, with tight, hard-fitting plumage. | 6 |
| | 100 |

**Mr. C. A. House's Red Saddle Hen. "Miss Ruby."**

Winner of 1st and the George Ure Cup for Best Saddle Fantail at the Crystal Palace, 1st and Spl. Fantail Club Show at Whitby, &c.

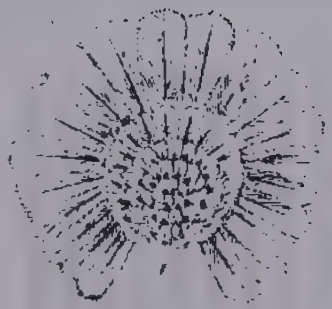
## CHAPTER V.

### Tails.

FROM the time of its leaving the nest, till it dies, the Fantail must be watched. No matter how good a bird may be, if left to its own devices, it will soon be in a bad way. A young Fan comes out of the nest sometimes looking everything that could be wished for, yet, in a little while its tail is wry, broken at the sides, or split in the middle, and all for the want of a little care. When writing on this subject some time ago, that enthusiastic American lover of Fans, Col. F. M. Gilbert, said: "What would we think of a careful (?) gardener who let his bushes and young trees grow as they pleased? We would say he did not know his business. A clip here and another there makes the young tree grow up straight, and in perfect proportion, and it is the same way with young Fantails. Half the bad, bunchy, and split tails we see are caused by neglect, pure and simple. The young Fan is clumsy. He does not know what his rapidly growing tail is for. Often he thinks it is simply a rest for his wings, and whenever he decides that this is the case, good-bye to the perfect tail. The perfect Fan drops his flights down under the tail, and if he has been 'pruned' rightly when young, even if the

wings catch for a moment at times, they soon drop down where they belong. There is nothing to make the feathers "bunch," and they grow as nature intended,"

How graphically true this description is, only those who have had good birds spoilt for want of watching know. The cuts I give with this chapter will, I hope, assist my young friends to grow their tails right. Fig. 1 gives a back view, and No. 2 a front view of a perfect tail, sound, strong, and well-balanced. Yet this tail can, by an awkward youngster, be very soon reduced to the state shown in Fig. 3. The wings are caught in the sides, and make great gaps. As soon as a youngster is noticed behaving in this way he should have his wings clipped: that is, have sufficient taken off the ends of his flights to make them clear the tail nicely; the gaps should be drawn together, and the feathers secured in position by means of a needle, a length of wool, and a short, narrow piece of card. Three or four feathers on each side of the gap should be sewn on the cardboard by the wool being looped round each feather. Fig. 4 shows the card on the tail. A small piece of card sewn on the tails of birds which are short in the back, and have a lot of style, will prevent them from not only pushing their heads through the centre, but also from knocking their feathers out of place and making it bunchy. It will also be found useful in cases where two or three feathers, as is sometimes the case, show an inclination to grow askew. Some fanciers of my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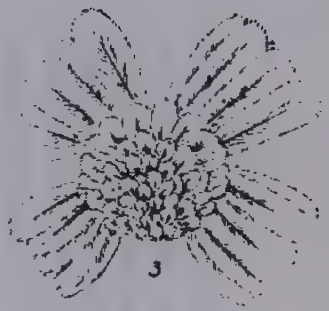
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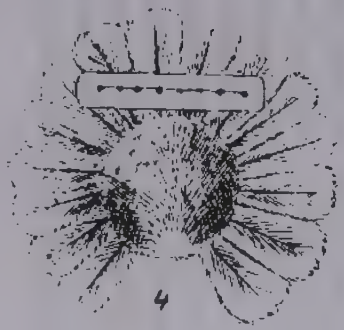
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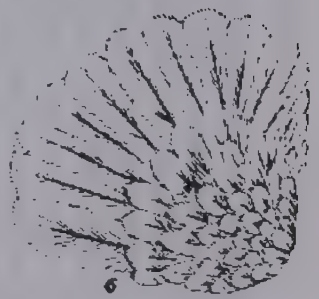
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acquaintance sew the feathers up together, using thin thread, and passing it right through the quills from the side of the feathers. Others loop the feathers with a bit of thread or worsted, and simply draw them into position again. Of the different methods, I prefer the cardboard, and that after a trial of all three. The centre gap is caused by the bird ramming its head back into its centre instead of letting it rest upon the cushion, and it is really astonishing how soon a good bird will spoil its tail once it takes up with this trick. It can be cured in the same way as the side gaps, excepting, of course, that the head of the bird must not be cut off like the flights. Another method of preserving the tail is to cut off about seven or eight feathers on each side, so that the flights fall clear of obstruction. Fig. 5 represents a wry tail. This may be natural, or it may arise from the bird striking one side of its tail every time it drops its wings. In either case, if not hereditary, it can easily be cured. One method is to cut off the whole of the side which lops over. Fig. 6 shows how this should be done, the tail being shown with the heavy side cut off. The weight is then taken off, and the heavy side of the rump is naturally pulled back into its rightful position. Another plan is to put small pieces of lead on the feathers of the tail on the opposite side to that which lops; this also is much practised, and with success, and I like it better than the tail-cutting business, because you do not disfigure your bird in any way whatever. Great care, however, must be used in fixing the lead so as not to injure the feathers.

If the wry-tail is not hereditary it usually answers quickly to either of these systems, but if it is hereditary the best thing to do is to kill the bird right away. It is a bad fault, and I never believe in keeping birds to perpetuate bad and unsightly faults. A Fan man should never breed from hereditary wry-tailed birds. One thing about a wry-tail is that it is easily detected, for as soon as ever the bird can get out of the nest-box it is observable in those born with it, and in others which contract it the sight of the wings sticking in the tails very quickly calls attention to it. Whilst I am writing about tails I might mention that some fanciers never allow young show birds to moult their tails naturally. When the bird has nearly finished its body moult, they pull the tail. The great reason why this is done is because the tail grows all at one time, and more regularly. Birds whose tails are not pulled, often moult feather by feather all through the show season, and are useless except, perhaps, for one or two shows. North country fanciers practise this tail pulling more than the Southerners, owing to the fact that in the South the birds moult earlier and more quickly than they do in the North, therefore the occasion does not arise. When the tail is pulled in this manner the bird always seems to enjoy better health during the winter than one whose tail is moulting all through the cold damp days of November, December, and January.

I don't know what the upholders and formulators of Pigeon Club "Rule III" will say to this effusion on tails.

I can quite believe they will want to excommunicate me with "bell, book, and candle," or else have me "hung, drawn, and quartered." All I can say in my defence is that these things are done by men who are members of the Pigeon Club, so, therefore, must of necessity come under the heading of those practices which "are conducive to the birds' health and comfort."

When there are any young birds about, their owner should go round the breeding loft the last thing before dusk, and look carefully as to how the youngsters are tucked up for the night. Nine times out of ten, birds of slovenly carriage commence their little tricks in their youthful days, about bed-time. They are tired and weary, and get their tail down to assist in the support of their bodies. If, on looking round, any birds are found with their heads or wings through their tails they should have them disengaged, and if this is done regularly, it will, in many cases, prevent more drastic remedies having to be resorted to later.

What I have said in this chapter may be objected to by some hyper-sensitive individuals, but by common-sense, practical fanciers, I believe it will be received in the way in which it is given, viz., as an honest attempt to help the uninitiated, and put them on a level with more experienced fanciers. Of faking, pure and simple, I have said nothing, as I do not believe in it. I have heard of, and seen, frames for the moulding of the tail whilst it is soft,

and still growing. I have seen birds with every feather in the tail fastened to a frame. Such proceedings I do not favour or countenance in the least. They are nothing more or less than faking. The instruction I have given in this chapter is not on the construction of tails, but on their conservation. I do not seek to make, but, rather, to save from ruin.

Ere I close, however, I would say how much I should like to see our judges disqualify birds shown with made tails. On several occasions during the past season, I have seen birds standing in the premier position with tails which unquestionably and unmistakably had been made, and made in a most brutal manner. I say brutal, because of the intense pain to which the poor birds are subjected. The experienced practical eye can easily and quickly detect these faked specimens, and those with only small experience can often see that something is wrong. They cannot tell what it is, but it is not natural. One very common way of so-called improvement is by the application of heat and pressure, and this is easily detected by the appearance of the cushion feathers which support the tail on each side. These feathers—back and front of the tail—grow towards each other with a natural bend or curve like unto the curve seen in the two sides of an arch, the tail running up between in the centre as though it were the keystone of the arch. Now, when undue pressure has been applied under the system mentioned, those feathers immediately supporting the tail lose their curved character, and are

quite flat. This is not natural, and should certainly not be allowed.

In other cases a surgical operation is performed on the rump of the bird to enhance the spread and carriage of tail. I have in my possession now a bird, which, if natural, would be considered a remarkably fine Fantail, but, alas ! for the frailty of human nature, it is not so, and the beautiful spread of tail which this bird possesses is due to a surgical operation performed upon it in the land across the Tweed. It is there that most of this faking takes place, and very closely and jealously is this secret guarded. It is a good thing that there is so much free-masonry amongst the fakers, and I, for one, trust it may long prevail. The knowledge possessed by the craft is of such a character that no good fancier will wish it to spread. The more secret it is kept the better for all honest folk. Still strange practices are perpetrated by these fakers, and the only way to checkmate them is for our judges to pass all doubtful birds, and disqualify all those which they feel certain have been operated upon.

**White Hen, "Enid,"**

Winner at Bridlington, the only time shown.

**Bred and Exhibited by Mr. J. B. Harrison.**

## CHAPTER VI.

### Washing.

THE task of washing an ordinary Pigeon is sufficient to frighten many a good fancier, but to wash a a Fan, well—no power on earth could persuade them to make the attempt. To anyone who, like myself, lives in a town or district where the atmosphere is laden with soot, the knowledge of how to wash is one of the first conditions of a successful career. The man who lives in a town, and yet can manage to show White Fantails, and win, deserves all he gets, if only for the trouble entailed in washing his pets, and preparing them for the judicial eye. I have won many a prize by condition and cleanliness of feather, and I have sometimes lost through want of it. Over and over again have I envied some of my colleagues who are situated in a district where smuts, and soots, and smoke do not abound.

The art of washing is not at all an easy one, and very few fanciers there are who can be styled expert laundrymen. If a bird has to be washed, it wants to be done well, or else not at all; a badly washed bird looks worse than one on which no attempt has been made. To start

with, I may as well say that no one should ever wash a Pigeon unless obliged to do so.

Washing certainly puts on a very spick-and-span appearance for a time, but it does the bird no good constitutionally, neither does it improve the feather permanently, but quite the reverse. When a bird has been washed two or three times, the feather loses its nature, and becomes harsh and dry looking, whilst every time a bird is washed it soils more quickly after.

The most suitable time for washing is in the evening, after tea, when the little ones are gone to bed, and the house is nice and quiet. Further, it is better for the birds to be washed after they have had their evening meal than when they have no food at all inside them.

The washing process is often a stumbling block to young fanciers. I well remember with what feelings I approached "my first." More can be learnt from one practical illustration than by reading a number of treatises on the subject. Those who are acquainted with a skilled exhibitor, should, if possible, gain admission to his sanctum when he is putting some of his gems through the refining process. The operation of washing a Pigeon is, to the novice, a most difficult undertaking, and, should he be at all nervous, it is liable to end in a disastrous manner. Two things are most necessary to the operator, namely, a fair share of nerve, and plenty of confidence in his own ability to bring the operation to a successful issue.

Before commencing operations on the show specimens, the operator should practice with a few common birds, for if the attempt should end in the maiming, laming, or killing either of these specimens, the loss will not be great. If successful with these commoners, this will give sufficient confidence to put more valuable specimens through the process. After a short time, the necessary confidence and knack of handling the birds will have been acquired, and the washing of five or six birds will not cause more uneasiness than will be felt in performing the same operation on one's own self.

The fire should be bright, yet not too fierce. In making up the fire, it should be well stirred with the poker, and all dust removed. The best way to make up a fire for drying birds is to use equal quantities of coal and coke; nice, knobby pieces, about the size of a tea-cup, should be used. A fire made in this way will throw out a much steadier heat than one made with coal only, it will also produce less smoke. Whilst the fire is burning up, the few articles required to successfully accomplish the task should be collected together. These are three good-sized bowls—hand basins will do—one for washing, and two for rinsing; a small honeycomb sponge, a tablet of soap, two or three nice soft cloths (discarded chamber towels will do very well indeed); one jug of cold water, a jug for hot water, a bottle of glycerine, and the household blue-bag.

As to what soap is best, opinions differ. The Chinese, or floating soap is, undoubtedly, the best, but its cost is prohibitive to the majority of Pigeon fanciers. Pears, brown Windsor, glycerine, white curd, Castile, and other soaps, all have their devotees. One thing must be guarded against, and that is common soap. The best made soaps are more free from alkali than the common ones, and thus, by their use, the colour of the plumage is not harmed. The effect of using common soap is that the alkali contained in it draws the colour from the birds' plumage. In addition to the articles I have named, a drying cage of some sort is required. Some fanciers use a large box, with a wired front. I myself use a large Poultry basket. The bottom must be covered with chaff or some similar substance. This will soak up any excrement that may be voided, and thus prevent the birds from soiling their plumage whilst in the drying box, or cage. The two cloths that are to be used for absorbing the moisture in the feathers of the birds should be hung on the drying cage or basket, in front of the fire; this will warm them, and prevent any draught getting at the birds whilst they are drying.

All things being in readiness, some cold water should be placed in each of the basins, and slightly tinged with ordinary washing blue; then add sufficient hot water so that you can comfortably bear your hand in it. If the water is hard, a very small piece of soda should be added to that placed in the first basin; this will soften, and assist

in removing the dirt more freely. Don't put too much. A piece about the size of a small hazel nut will be ample. You must, however, not forget that soda should never be placed in the water in which you wash Blues, Silvers, Reds, or Yellows. A little glycerine should also be placed in the rinsing water, about a teaspoonful to a quart of water. Take your soap, and with the sponge work up a good lather in the first basin.

You will now be quite ready to commence operations. First of all, take the bird you intend to operate upon in your hands, with its head towards you. Immerse it in the lather for a moment or two previous to using the sponge. The object of this immersion is to so let the water saturate and soften the feathers that when you begin to rub them with the sponge, they will not break. It is a good plan to gently move the wings and tail to and fro in the suds. The motion has a tendency to withdraw the dirt from the feathers, and save rubbing. Don't rub the feather more than you are obliged. Being ready to start the rubbing process, commence by spreading the right wing over the fingers; give it a good soaping with the sponge; then turn the bird round in your hand, and serve the left wing in the same manner; next place the bird on its back, and apply the sponge to the under part of the wings, tail, and body. Attention should now be given to the head and neck, and it is here that most care will be required. The dirt seems to cling more firmly to the head feathers than it does to any other part of the

body. Great care is needed in keeping the soap out of the eyes. A little soap will not hurt, but should too much be used, the eyes may sustain serious injury. It is a good plan to soften the dirt round the head by rubbing with the finger, and then the sponge need only be used very little near the eyes. If the wings and tail are very dirty they should be spread out on the table and rubbed well with the sponge.

Having completed the lathering process, you should now proceed to get the soap out of the feathers. Hold the bird securely in the hands, and give it a good rinsing in the second basin; then finally rinse it in the third basin. Don't be afraid to use plenty of water; give the bird a thorough sousing; for unless you get every particle of soap out of the feathers, your labour will all be thrown away. Should any soap be left in the feathers, the bird will present a very rough appearance when dry. The rinsing being finished, draw the wings and tail smartly through the hands, this will extract much of the water, and mop the body with another sponge. Then take one of the cloths, roll the bird in it, and wipe your hands in one of the others. Having done this, throw one end of the cloth over your left hand, place the bird in it with your fingers and thumb under its wings; take the other end of the cloth in the right hand and proceed to dry the back, wings, and tail, at the same time so manipulating the left hand that all the water in the under part of the body may be drawn out. Then straighten the wings and tail with

the right hand. The whole of the drying operation should be performed as near the fire as possible.

Some birds stand the washing much better than others, and it takes little effect on them, but on some of their weaker brethren it has a very exhausting effect. If a bird should look as though it is approaching its end when laid in the drying hamper you need not be alarmed, after laying like that for some little time it will get on its legs, and soon pull itself together. Fatal results from washing birds are few and far between. When they do occur, it is generally by the bird being held too tightly. Some birds struggle very much whilst being washed, and should you at any time feel that a bird is going to elude your grasp, it is best to let it go, you can easily pick it up again, but should you make an effort to tighten your hold of it, you will be almost certain to harm it. If the bird is held firmly in the way I have described, it will not be able to struggle much. If you are at all nervous, your grasp of the bird will not be firm. By some intuitive instinct birds always seem able to tell if the person handling them is nervous, and they act accordingly. But when secured in a good, firm grasp, they, as a rule, struggle little. There is a great art in handling birds, an adept at the practice feels as much at home when handling one of his little pets as a mother does when fondling her infant child. The birds, know and appreciate the difference between the two systems.

The birds should not be allowed to get too dry in the drying cage. When about half dry, they should be taken out, and allowed to flap their wings a bit, this assists in the webbing of the feather. The birds must be held firmly by the thighs during this process. In an hour they should be removed to the other side of the room. It takes ten or twelve minutes to wash a bird, and it should be in the drying cage fifty or sixty minutes. All pens in which newly washed birds are placed should be scrupulously clean, or the washing will have been labour in vain. Birds with soiled plumage stand very little chance on the show bench now-a-days, competition is so very keen that the slightest difference in condition oftentimes turns the scale.

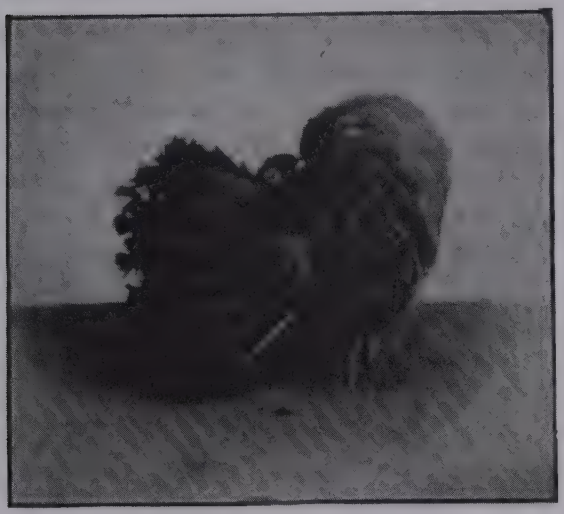
In the opinion of some fanciers, Whites are the only variety which are improved by washing. This is a mistake, some of the coloured varieties are much improved by a wash. I have shown Whites, Blues, Blacks, and Saddles, and I have washed all of them, and my successes speak as to the value, or otherwise, of washing. I have also washed Reds and Yellows, as above described, and with Platt & Fawdry's "Wash to Win," a preparation which is most valuable in the preparation of Blues, Silvers, Reds, and Yellows, and one I can from experience highly recommend. One great point in washing is being able to do it well. A second-rater can be considerably improved by a good laundryman, but on the other hand, a bad wash will destroy the chance of the very finest bird ever bred. Again, there is a difference in the quality

of feather of birds, and whilst washing, in a general way, improves some birds, it ruins others. I have birds in my possession now that I should never think of washing. A wash would spoil them, but a dry rub with a silk handkerchief would considerably improve them. I am speaking now of coloured birds. This strange peculiarity of feathering is one I cannot convey to my readers' perception by writing. No book learning or reading will teach it. It must be obtained by practical experience and keen observation of the birds. Blues, Silvers, and Blacks are the colours most affected in this manner.

## CHAPTER VII.

### Training.

WHEN giving my opinion of what constitutes an Ideal Fantail, I said that no matter how good a bird might be, if it lacked carriage, it was no good. Few there are who will venture to contradict me in this assertion. What is it which makes the Fantail so noticeable to the ordinary observer? Is it not its, to them, peculiarity of carriage? Undoubtedly. Now, this carriage, which is so attractive, both to fanciers and non-fanciers, must be bred for. Some young fanciers, imagine it is all a matter of training, but it is not so. Training will make a bird show itself to advantage, and thus improve, so to speak, its natural properties, but it can never give carriage to a bird that does not inherit it from its parents. Notwithstanding, careful training has much to do with the success or failure of a loft when in competition with others. This being so, I propose, in this chapter, giving a few hints to the novices as to how they may get the best out of their birds. In my last I dwelt upon the necessity of cleanliness and good condition of feather. Now I wish to tell my readers how to get it shown off to the best advantage.



**Blue Hen, "Madge,"**

Winner of 2nd Crystal Palace, 1st and Challenge Cup, Liverpool, &c.

**Bred and Exhibited by Mr. C. A. House.**

Everyone who has visited a show has noted the difference in the carriage of the different birds on view. Some stand with their heads thrown well back on to the cushion, whilst others have their heads in the corners of their pens, and their tails over their backs. Sometimes fatigue causes this; the birds are overshown, and do not stand at their best. At other times it is lack of training, whilst, of course, want of merit is also the cause of the awkward positions assumed by some birds. When birds are shown under all-round judges, at ordinary shows, those which stand up well in the pen, and show off their qualities, stand much the best chance of winning. A sleepy, worn-out, or awkward member is not worth much in a small pen, therefore, if we would win, our birds must receive some instruction in the art of deportment. Even when shown under a specialist, who usually has a walking pen at his command, a well-trained bird has a great advantage over one that is untrained. I have before now seen birds placed in a walking pen, and do what he would, the judge could not get them to show themselves. Up to the top of the pen, through the wires, in the corners, and anywhere and everywhere but where they ought to be. Others are put in the pen, and immediately begin to march round with an elegant and dignified strut, tail well balanced, and head reclining gracefully upon the cushion. This is what we want, and a bird that does this is bound to attract and keep the attention of the judge, whilst the wild and sulky ones are returned to their own pens.

One of the most aggravating cases of sulkiness I have ever seen was at the last Liverpool Show. Mr. Gray's lovely blue cock, "King of the Blues," would not show. I have seen and handled this bird hundreds of times in my own loft, and never saw him do wrong before, but at Liverpool something had upset him, and show he would not. In fact, so badly did he show that Mr. Fuller-Russell, who with myself, was watching the judging from a distance, did not recognise the bird, and could scarcely credit my remark when I said it was "King of the Blues."

Training for the show pen should commence almost as soon as the young squeakers leave their parents. As soon as you see that you have a promising youngster, one that is likely to make a show bird, you should give it all the care and attention that you can bestow upon it, so as to get it to show off its points to the best advantage. This training must be gone about carefully, thoroughly, and systematically. There must be no hurry or flurry; if there is, the birds will only be scared and frightened, and a great deal more harm than good will result. When the youngsters are removed from their parents, they should be placed in a loft, with plenty of light, ventilation, and elbow-room. Never overcrowd young birds if you wish them to show well. Before you commence any actual training operations, let the birds get used to you. Move about gently in the loft day after day, and let a few grains of hemp fall about your feet. By these means the birds will welcome your approach, and will not be afraid of you.

This tameness goes a long way in the training. When tame, you can catch a bird so much better than when it is wild. This is a great point in Fantails. It is so very easy to break two or three tail feathers when handling a bird that the greatest care should be exercised when catching birds in the loft. Further, when a bird is tame, it will not rush and dash about the walking pen, but will wait expectantly for its master to let it know what he requires.

When a well-bred Fan is put into a walking pen, it should drop its wings down under its tail as gracefully and neatly as a swan carries its neck. Unfortunately, many a good bird does not do this naturally, but requires teaching how to do it. If the youngster puts its wings through the top, or the sides of its tail, they should be gently lifted, and worked down to their proper position. If the tail is carried too much forward, place your judging stick on the bird's back, and work it back over the tail, gently bearing the same down whilst doing it. Should the tail be dropped on the floor, lift it up in reverse fashion to that just described. When first put in a walking pen, many babes are a bit high-minded, and commence star-gazing, instead of trying to put their heads out of sight behind their backs. This may only be fright, or it may be from an innate desire to be inquisitive, and know what is going on in the world about it. Be the cause what it may, we cannot permit our future winner of firsts and specials to indulge itself in such bad habits. It

must be taught to be humble-minded, and to hide its diminished head. This can be done by placing the judging stick on its breast, and gently pressing the head down on to the cushion.

There are birds, which, like some babies, are such dear little creatures that they never give their owner a moments trouble or worry. They seem to know for what purpose they have been brought into the world, and act accordingly. Even with these, a little training has its advantages. It keeps them up to the mark, and I like to get amongst my squeakers in the summer evenings, and put them through their facings. No matter how smart a man may be, a little instruction from the drill sergeant improves his carriage, and it's the same with the Fans. bad habits are easily formed, and the smartest young Fan ever bred will develop into a regular duffer if not kept up to the mark by being played with two or three times a week. It must not be overdone, or the bird will get sulky, and take no notice.

**Mr. G. E. Gray's White Hen, "Daisy II."**

1st Crystal Palace, &c.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Moulting.

THE moulting season is a very critical time for the Fantail enthusiast. Over and over again have I seen birds that, previous to the moult, looked like making winners, come out of it like veritable scarecrows, and only fit for the pot. "As the twig's inclined, so the tree is bent," is an old proverb, and one every Fantail breeder should remember during the moulting season, as so much depends upon it.

The moult is called by some the "moulting sickness." I cannot agree with this, for how can a natural and properly-ordered function be a disease or sickness? If it were not natural for birds to moult, then it would be correct to speak of the "moult sickness." That it may develop into a sickness I am willing to admit, if all the laws and rules of hygiene and nature are ignored and broken. If the lofts are overcrowded, if they are not kept well cleansed, if the birds are not allowed access to substances likely to assist them in the growth of feather, if the water supply is contaminated, or the food hopper supplied with corn that is not sweet and sound, in such

circumstances it is possible that what should be a healthy and natural function becomes an unhealthy and unnatural sickness.

If a quick, healthy moult is desired, the birds must not be overcrowded, as it is impossible for birds to get the necessary amount of exercise to keep them healthy if they are overcrowded. Overcrowded birds are always deficient in both muscular and constitutional strength, therefore fanciers should always see to it that their pets have plenty of room in which to develop muscle and bone. Further, an overcrowded loft not only prevents exercise, but its atmosphere is at all times vitiated by the exhalations of the birds it contains. This thought leads to another—ventilation. At this time more than any other is an abundant supply of fresh air needed, therefore all ventilators and windows should be kept open day and night. If this is done, it will do much to keep off watery eyes, roup, etc., which are so easily contracted during the moult. Birds which get plenty of fresh air and exercise are generally strong and healthy. The grit box must also be well looked after during the moulting season. The lime, salt, and iron contained in the different grits upon the market are needed to assist the growth of the feather, and to keep the blood cool and pure. The food supply must also be of the best. No dirty, weevily grain must be used, and plenty of fresh water must be supplied, both for bathing and drinking, the bath having a great deal to do with the easy and quick growth of the new feather.

When and wherever possible, it is best to moult old and young birds separately. There are, however, few lofts in which this can be done, but better results may be expected if it is done. Those whom circumstances debar from having both old and young and the sexes separate, should most certainly moult the sexes by themselves. First of all, divide the young cocks and hens, and then, as the breeding pens are broken up, put the adults in with the youngsters of either sex. If the sexes are not divided in this manner, many young hens will be driven to premature laying, their moult will be stopped, their tails damaged, and their constitutions ruined.

Another point to be remembered is that at this time our birds are in a state almost bordering on that of fever. It is well known that Pigeons are amongst the hottest blooded creatures, and during the moult more so than at any other season of the year. About twice a week, whilst the birds are casting their feathers, I put a little Epsom salts in the drinking water, say, one ounce to a gallon of water. Further, once a week, I mix a little Condy's Fluid with the contents of the drinking fountain. Should any of the birds show signs of roup, I at once mix Condy's Fluid with the water, and continue its use daily. As to quantity, well, just sufficient to make the water a rich purple.

Choice specimens, which you wish to moult out quickly and well, should, on being removed from the

breeding quarters, be given a course of physic. Epsom salts are as good as anything; a dose of about as much as will cover a shilling, given three or four mornings, will give the birds a good cleansing, and help them to moult freely. It is also a good plan for about the first fortnight of the moult to give these gems of the collection a cod liver oil capsule morning or night, and if any particular bird is not a good feeder, cod liver oil and quinine capsules may be substituted for plain cod liver oil. There is a great difference in capsules. I have had makes which caused sickness every time they were given to the birds. Those sent out by Jenkinson, of Birmingham, are very good, and all that the most fastidious could desire, and I have never known a bird to be sick after using them.

Careful watch should be kept over the stock during the moulting season, as some birds go light with most startling rapidity. A bird may be all right one day, and two or three days after it may have wasted right away. Immediately you notice a bird looking seedy, remove it from its fellows, give it a little opening medicine, and then a tonic, cod-liver oil and quinine capsules, or Parrish's Chemical Food Capsules. Sickly birds should always be penned off by themselves, and have their appetites tempted by the luxury of a little canary seed. This seed is much liked by Pigeons, and it often acts as a real good pick-me-up.

If a sharp look-out is not kept, insect life makes rapid progress during the moult. The free use of the bath will help to keep these marauders down, as will the frequent collecting of all the loose floating feathers to be seen in the loft. It is astonishing how quickly insects multiply, when heaps of cast-off clothes—i.e., the old feathers—are left lying about the loft for weeks together.

During the early days of the moulting season, the same food regime may continue as has been in vogue during the breeding time. Some fanciers stop the wheat supply as soon as the birds have finished breeding. This is a mistake. Wheat assists considerably in the throwing off of the old coat, in fact, I know of nothing better than a little new wheat to make birds moult quickly. It will often cause birds to break and cast their feathers freely when other means fail. Towards the close of the moult, both the dari and wheat should be sensibly diminished, but gradually. Don't let it be done with a rush. All changes of diet should be made slowly, so as not to upset the digestive organs. As the birds get fine in feather, nothing but tares and maple peas should be used. A little canary seed and rice will assist in the tightening process.

Whilst the birds are growing their new feathers, they should be handled as little as possible, the new body feathers are very easily damaged, and it does not take much rough usage to knock out a wing or tail feather.

This may cause the loss of a prize or two owing to the bird having to be kept at home till the lost feather or feathers have been replaced.

Those Fanciers who keep the colours, and whose lofts are exposed to the sun should be careful to keep their birds out of the direct glare of Old Sol, or he may ruin their stock, so far as the exhibition pen is concerned. Birds which are permitted to revel as they like in the sun, will, at the end of the moulting season, be found to be weak and patchy in colour. More particularly will this apply to the more delicate colours, reds and yellows especially. If bright, rich coloured plumage of great depth and solidity is required the sun must not be allowed to beat fiercely upon it. Whites are not affected in this way, but all other colours are, in a greater or lesser degree. The effect upon duns, blues, and blacks is not so great as it is upon silvers, reds, and yellows, still even the former colours are more brilliant if the sun is kept from them. It seems most peculiar that plants and flowers are all the richer in colour for being exposed to the full rays of the sun, but Poultry, Pigeons, and Canaries must be shielded from its power if the colours are to be preserved. The more strange does it seem when we let our thoughts dwell upon the rich plumaged denizens of the tropics. Here we see all the colours of the rainbow in every shade reproduced and enhanced, the tropical heat notwithstanding. Again, in the far East, we find colour and marking very much to the front in the varieties favoured by Pigeon

breeders in those parts. It, therefore, seems as though the atmosphere in our "right little, tight little island" must in some way have even greater power than the sun. Be that as it may, the fact remains that here in England, the sun, from some reason or other, destroys the colour of our pets, and he who would be to the front in any coloured variety must keep his birds protected from the sun. Experienced breeders know the force of this, and rarely forget to have blinds or awnings fitted to their aviaries. Young hands are, even if they know it, apt to forget it, and thus he who would teach the young idea how to shoot is of necessity forced to remind his readers of these very elementary truths.

I have said a quick moult is good for the health of the birds. No one can deny this. Another point not so generally accepted is that quick moults are of the greatest benefit in producing rich, brilliant colour. To breeders of blues, blacks, reds, yellows, and saddles, this colour question is an important one, and anything which conduces to its improvement needs and deserves consideration. It is well known to Canary breeders that oil has much to do with brilliancy of colour, and for this reason birds are fed upon fatty substances, such as inga and linseed, fat raw bacon and beef suet. Now, a Pigeon breeder can hardly use any of these things except the linseed, and of this Pigeons are not particularly fond. When they can be induced to eat it, the effect is good. Although the Pigeon votary has this difficulty, he can overcome it by the use of

cod liver oil capsules. One cod liver oil capsule given morning and night during the moult will do much to enrich the colour, and put a nice, glossy sheen upon it. A little iron given in the drinking water twice or thrice a week also improves the colour indirectly. For this a few grains of sulphate of iron and quinine may be mixed in the drinking water, or a piece of sulphate of iron, about the size of a hazel nut, to each gallon of water may be used. It tones and enriches the blood, thus adds to the deposition of colour, and tightness of plumage. This latter point is one also worthy of thought, the colour of a tight, close-feathered bird is always rendered more conspicuous than that of a slack, long-feathered specimen, therefore tightness of feather must be sought after. This will come with careful feeding on good grain, the use of the capsules, and the tonic as described.

Another point in connection with the moult is this: Can anything be done to increase the natural growth of the tail feather? Warmth will assist the growth of the feather, making it not only longer and broader, but also stronger in the fibre. This is owing to a warm moult being a quick one, and a tail which grows quickly is always stronger and more handsome than one which is slow in growth. Sulphur, oatmeal, and bone-meal also assist in the growth of feather, and during the moult I give my birds, twice a day, a good-sized pill, composed of equal parts of sulphur, oatmeal, bonemeal, and charcoal. I have

done this now for some years, and can speak highly of the good resulting therefrom.

It sometimes happens that the tail feathers burst through the sheath or covering very slowly; in fact, some grow their full length and are still in the quill. When this is the case, the outside sheath should be split by having a needle point run down it. Holding the tail near to a fire for a few minutes will then quickly cause the feathers to burst.

One thing, above all others, should not be forgotten during the moult, and that is the grit box. Jenkinson's Perfect Gravel is of great assistance to birds whilst moulting, and they must have a good supply of that, or an equivalent thereto.

## CHAPTER IX.

### Showing.

IN this chapter I intend giving a few hints on how to achieve success in the show pen. First of all I will deal with the preparation of birds for an event like the Dairy Show. As everyone knows, the Dairy is the first of our large shows in the autumn, and many of the birds are barely ready ere it comes round. About three or four weeks before this show, the birds intended for Islington should be caught up, and given a day or two in the pens. "What pens?" some may ask. Well, for want of a better name I will call them preparation pens. They are not ordinary show pens or walking pens, but are made of wood, and built in stacks. In front of each pen is a ledge, upon which the food and water vessels are placed. Most of our successful exhibitors have a stack of such pens. Pens about 2 feet or 2 feet 6 inches long, by 18 inches in height and depth. The pens should have good-sized doors; in fact, the whole front may be door. Some I have seen have stout wire fronts, with wood frames, whilst in others both rails and frames have been wood. Put into one of these pens for a day or two at a time, the birds become thoroughly accustomed to them, and learn to stand

**White Hen, "May."**

1st Crystal Palace, 1st and Challenge Cup Liverpool, 1st Portsmouth, 1st Earby, &c.

**Bred and Exhibited by Mr. C. A. House.**

well. When the birds are in the pens, all the little faults that need correcting may be picked out. For instance, if a bird is likely to thrust its head through the centre of its tail, it can be detected at once, and the tail carded in the manner I have described in the chapter on tails, or it may hit the young growing feathers on the side of the tail with its wing. If it practises either of these tricks it will soon ruin its tail for exhibition purposes. When the tail is full-grown, or nearly so, it can, as I have said, be carded, but it may happen that the tail needs shielding at a time when it is not hard enough to be carded. It should, in such cases, be protected by a piece of parchment being sewn on to the strongest of the cushion feathers. Further, the bird should not be allowed to fly about the loft, but should be confined in the pen entirely, only being allowed on the loft floor once a week, to get a bath.

Birds that are moulting their tails all right will only need penning now and then, to get them accustomed to the ordeal, till the last week or so before the show, when they should be confined entirely. This total confinement for a few days previous to a show has much to do with successful showing. To a bird left flying about upon the loft floor, week in and week out, month by month, the sight of some other birds is no treat, and he has nothing to feel pleased about, but to a bird who has not seen a loft-mate for a week, the sight of another bird near him is sufficient to fill him with delight, and his little breast fairly heaves with pleasure. A bird which has been confined in

this manner shows ten times better than one picked up from the loft floor and sent straight away to the show. This is only a little matter, but a great deal hangs upon it.

When birds are thus penned they can very readily be given any special food or conditioner intended to assist them either in getting through the moult or tightening and putting a bloom on the feathers. I might here say that my birds during the show season are given a fair quantity of canary seed. As a conditioner I know of no seed to equal it. The apartment in which these pens are situated should not be too light. The full glare of the light should be shaded off. If this is done the birds, when they reach the open pens at the show, and get the benefit of plenty of light, will exhibit their properties of style and action to the fullest extent.

Whilst not believing in any coddling or pampering of birds in a general way, I do believe in getting my birds fit for show, and I do it by considering as much as possible what I want the birds to do, and preparing them for it. When a man is running a horse in a race, he conditions him, and exhibition Pigeons require to be conditioned. With this object in view the first requirement is that the blood must be clear, liver and kidneys working freely. To obtain this result, a few doses of Jenkinson's Revivers should be given when the birds are first placed in the pens. Then, in addition to the tares and peas, which

form the staple diet at this time, a little canary and hemp seed should be given, just to make the birds "a bit proud."

When the time comes for the birds to be despatched, have all baskets and boxes ready, with labels, and plenty of chaff or sawdust in the bottom, to prevent the droppings from soiling the plumage on the way to the show. As you take each bird out of the pen, carefully, with finger and thumb, smooth out the tail feathers, and thus let your birds leave home in the best condition possible. With birds inclined to rub their tails a good bit, this smoothing out process may be done the day before, as the chances are there will not be time to do it on the morning the birds are despatched. These things require plenty of time to be done properly, and done properly they must be if success is to follow. Many a time have I seen birds passed by the judges, which, had some experienced fancier shown them, would, doubtless, have won. In fact, I have known birds shown time after time, without getting more than a vhc, yet, upon changing hands, they won 1st and special as frequently as they before obtained "a codding card." One instance in particular I remember. In 1892 I sold a young fancier a very good white cock, at a reasonable figure. He exhibited it several times, without success; he exchanged it for another bird, not nearly as good. The individual who got the bird soon began winning firsts and specials with it, and after a little while, passed it on to someone else, at a big figure. It was knowing how to handle the bird that made the difference.

A great deal also depends on the particular fancy of the judge. A bird that can win every time under one judge will not get looked at by another, and the success of many fanciers is due to the manner in which they follow certain judges with certain birds. Whenever I find one of our all-round judges take a fancy to one of my birds, I soon let him have it again. Feed the judges with what they want is my motto. There is one of our best known all-round men, who at one time I could never win under, and I got fairly to think he did not know a Fan at all. One day I sent a noted white hen under him, to one of our leading Northern shows. A friend took her for me, and on his return at night, told me I had got first. I replied, "You are kidding," and I could not be persuaded till I saw the card. That hen never missed a first under that particular judge after. Dear old girl, she is now past showing, but she is still all right in the breeding loft, and some of my most successful youngsters own her as their mother.

Some judges go for tail, others for action, and some for shape. The cute exhibitor finds out what they want, and sends it. It may not be his ideal, but it's the judges', and the judges are the men who place the cards. When you don't know what a judge requires, you must play two cards, and send a big bird, with plenty of tail, and another with heaps of go about it. Again, some judges are very eccentric, and never go for the same thing twice. These men you must also give a double shot to. Others will not look at a coloured bird, whilst some favour them greatly.

If you would be successful, you must study all these points.

It is difficult, very difficult, to suit some of our adjudicators, as the following incident will prove. Some time ago, I sent a good, big-tailed bird under one of our most popular all-round men, and he gave it first. I sent it again the second time, and he gave it h.c., and to add insult to injury, sent me the following message by a friend: "Tell House that if I like big ones, I don't like them quite so big as this." Some might argue that this was inconsistency. I don't think so. At the first show, no doubt, all the birds shown were more or less big, therefore, my big one did not look out of place; at the second show, a more typical or up-to-date lot were present, and then, by comparison, my bird looked too big. Exhibitors want to consider these things, and not be too hasty in condemning the judges.

Even our specialists have not all the same ideas, yet, generally speaking, it is easier to select a bird to win under a specialist than it is under an all-round man. All specialists have a good grasp of the standard type of bird, and only vary in little particular points upon which some lay more stress than others. Again, they have only a few birds to judge—tens, where the all-round man has hundreds—consequently, they have more time at their disposal to play with the birds, and draw out their good points, and this must be considered when selecting birds

for a show. Under the all-round man a quick-showing bird is needed, one that will be all alive directly it is spoken to, or hears the rattle of the judging stick. On the other hand, for the specialist, you want a bird that improves with handling, and grows to the eye, so to speak. The longer you look at some birds the better you like them, and these are the birds for the walking pen and the specialist judge.

Much has been said about the advantages to be derived from an exhibitor penning his own birds. In my opinion they are more apparent than real. My greatest successes have been scored when I did not pen my birds, notwithstanding that I would rather pen my own birds than have them penned by someone who never owned a Fantail. The great advantage in penning your own bird is that you can put the little final touches on their toilet. For instance, if a tail has been roughened up, you can straighten it out a bit. Further, the stewards at shows are not all expert handlers of Fantails, and quite recently, at one of our best shows, I saw a steward, a paid man, penning the Fantails of one of our most noted exhibitors. The tail was handy to hold, and so he held them with the tail crushed up in his hand whilst he opened the pen doors. Having opened the doors, instead of putting the birds in gently he almost threw them in. I drew the attention of one of the chief officials to the fact, and it was altered. Such penning does not help to win prizes. I have seen it stated that the great advantage to be gained

in an exhibitor taking his birds to a show, and penning them in the morning, just before the judges commence their work, is that the birds show better soon after being penned, and thus the man who takes his birds gains an advantage over absent exhibitors.

This sounds very well, but from personal experience I know that one or two gentlemen who have had most to say on this matter never send their birds in time to be penned over-night, except at such shows as the Dairy, Palace, and Birmingham, where they know they must be in. Over and over again have I taken my birds to a show, and been the first to pen. Afterwards the birds of those gentlemen who complain about birds being penned late have put in an appearance, so if any advantage was gained by late penning, they had it.

When not able to accompany my exhibits to a show, I like to get them off so that they arrive in the evening of the day before the show, and thus get a good night's rest ere being judged. From experience, I can say this pays best. A bird that has had a good night's rest shows much better than one just off a long journey.

The chief factors in showing, however, are to have your birds thoroughly fit, and to show what you know the judge fancies.

## CHAPTER X.

### Diseases.

IF Fantails are kept scrupulously clean, have free access to the grit box, are given good, sound food, and plenty of fresh water, both for bathing and drinking, there will be very little disease amongst them.

The most prevalent diseases to which they are subject are roup and canker. Fantails are very free moulters, and ofttimes throw their feathers so fast that they look almost bare in some parts of their bodies. When this is the case, the birds are very apt to catch cold, the same as their owners are liable to do when imperfectly clad.

Colds should be taken in hand immediately they make their appearance, as a neglected cold is the forerunner of many and various of the ills to which Pigeon flesh is heir. "A stitch in time saves nine," and nowhere is this more true than in the Pigeon loft. A little carelessness or forgetfulness may easily end in the death of one or more champions. If a bird shows signs of catarrh or common cold, it should be given a dose of Epsom Salts to give tone to the system, and then for a

few days I would advise a couple of camphor pills, to be given twice a day. A little Condy's Fluid placed in the drinking water daily (just enough to make the water purplish) has a good effect. If the symptoms get more virulent, and roup appears to have supervened, then resource should be had at once to Jenkinson's Roup Cure, a most excellent preparation. The patient's head should be bathed with hot water three or four times a day, being dried after each bathing, and all mucous carefully removed. After all traces of the disease have disappeared, a few Tonic Pills may be given to brace the system up a bit.

Canker in the mouth and throat is a disease that often makes its appearance amongst the youngsters during the breeding season. In past years I have been greatly troubled with this complaint, and have lost many a promising youngster. The last few seasons I have only had two or three cases, I am thankful to say, and although the patients in each case were young squabs, I cured them with Jenkinson's remedy. If any of my readers should find any of their birds affected, they should first of all give the patient a dose of Epsom Salts, then carefully remove the deposit with a blunt instrument of some kind—I usually use the thick end of a quill toothpick. When the cheesy substance is all out, touch the spot affected with a camel-hair brush, which has been previously dipped in the Canker Cure. This treatment should be followed every day for a week, or as long as there are any signs of

the canker. A very good and effective remedy is Jenkinson's Canker Cure ; it has proved its efficacy in thousands of cases.

On several occasions I have come across birds with a soft spongy sort of growth about the feet. It does not seem to affect the birds' health in any way, or to cause the individuals affected any personal discomfort. Still, it is very unsightly, and is better off than on. The only remedy I know of for its removal is an ointment made by Mr. Jenkinson, and which he calls Victa.

Mr. Richard Woods, in his admirable manual on the Diseases of Pigeons, speaks of "One eye cold" as "a most mysterious disease," and mysterious it is. The attacks usually come on during the moulting season. The eye becomes inflamed, and exudes thin watery matter which quickly gives the affected specimen a most unsightly appearance, and makes it feel very uncomfortable. The treatment I have found most effective is isolation, Epsom Salts, zinc lotion, and warm water. As soon as I find a bird affected I bathe the eye with warm water, carefully dry it, and then drop inside the lid two or three drops of zinc lotion ; this lotion is composed of one ounce of rose water, and three grains sulphate of zinc. Internally, I administer a pinch of Epsom Salts, morning and night.

Worms in Pigeons are very rare, but I have come across several cases amongst my birds, and, strange to

say, each time it has been the Blacks which have been affected. The treatment is simple. Santonin is very efficacious, and can be given in capsule form. Two or three doses are ample to cause the death and expulsion of the worms in the body. About one grain of santonin in a capsule is a dose, and should be given in the early morning, when the crop is empty. This dose should be followed, an hour afterwards, by a capsule of castor oil, or 30 drops of warm salad oil. The santonin destroys the worms, and the oil causes their expulsion. Feed sparingly the day before, and do not give food for at least four hours after the dose has been given. A second dose can be administered 48 hours after the first, and if necessary, a third may be given after a similar interval. These santonin capsules may be obtained from any chemist.

The only other affection any of my birds have ever been plagued with is swollen feet and legs, a sort of gouty affection. This I have always cured by the administration of Epsom Salts, morning and night, and by painting the legs with tincture of iodine.

With this chapter I bring my task to an end. I have gone pretty fully into most things connected with Fantails, and, this being so, my object is accomplished.

Ere I close, however, I make an appeal to all lovers of this handsome variety who are not already members of

the Fantail Club, to at once join its ranks. The Club is one of the most active and vigorous specialist clubs in the Fancy. It already numbers over seventy members, and its numbers are continually increasing. It has subscribed for, and owns, six or seven very valuable Challenge Trophies, which are yearly put into competition at the club show. It offers money specials at the provincial shows during the winter season, and to all shows giving two classes for Fantails, it gives one of its Certificates of Merit. It, year by year, appoints specialist judges to adjudicate at the most important shows. It has framed, and adopted, a most comprehensive set of standards, which have been adopted by the American Fantail Clubs, and have been designated by one of our leading English writers as "all that a set of standards should be, and quite the best thing of the kind published." It has also framed a very useful set of show rules, and is generally doing much to advance the interests of Fantail breeders by securing better classification, by the putting down of fraud, and by the appointment of experienced and competent judges at the Dairy, Palace, Aquarium, Liverpool, and other large shows. Mr. Fuller-Russell, of 17, Gracechurch Street, E.C., the club's energetic Hon. Sec., will be most pleased to give any further information concerning the club, or to receive names for membership.

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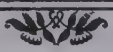

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### 1899.

| | |
|---|---|
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| Crystal Palace ... | ... Diamond Jubilee Cup, Challenge Cup, 5 Firsts, 6 Seconds, 1 Third, 5 Fourths 4 Fifths. |
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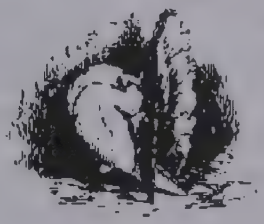

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